

THIRTEENTH EDITION.

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DEADWOOD DICK'S

DUST

OR,

THE CHAINED HAND.

A Strange Story of the Mines, Being the
35th and Ending Number of the Great
"Deadwood Dick" Series.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "ROSEBUD
ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DEADWOOD DICK.

"SATAN'S SNAP" might seem a strange name for a mining settlement, to the average tenderfoot, but that such a camp did exist, until a few months ago, is authoritative, and that, too, in the sublime climate of Arizona.

And one night, that was fearfully hot, in the town of Satan's Snap—a mushroom city of perhaps one hundred and fifty inhabitants—saw the only saloon.

NEITHER OF THE PRISONERS VOUCHSAFED A REPLY, AND SO CALAMITY JANE AND HER COMPANION WERE WHEELED INTO LINE, AND THE DEATH MARCH BEGAN.

hotel and gaming-room combined, well-filled with people, a good majority of whom were the rough and uncouth denizens of the camp, while some others present were passengers from the northerly-bound stage, which laid over night at Satan's Snap, each trip.

The saloon in question was known as the Black Flag, from the fact that, from a staff attached to the roof, constantly floated a banner of black and piratical appearance.

The proprietor of the 'shebang,' a brawny individual of dark and forbidding aspect, who bore the name of French Ferd—although it was apparent to the observer that there was little that was French about him—stated when any inquiry was made of him about the flag, that he had formerly been a sailor upon the razing main, and had captured the trophy from a piratical vessel.

Few who knew anything about French Ferd, however, took any stock in this assertion, for the man was a thoroughbred desperado, and the character of the house he kept was of a dangerous if not really a murderous order.

Rough as were many of the citizens of Satan's Snap, there were some who would hesitate to break what little honorable record they did have by becoming a *habitué* of the Black Flag.

With passengers of the mountain stage coach it was different.

French Ferd's was the only public place in the camp, and they had no choice but to accept of such accommodations as he had to offer, and few who had been guests once, would testify that they were either good or indifferent.

The meals were wretched, the whisky worse, and the cloth-partitioned rooms small, and boasting of cot beds, only.

The saloon part of the establishment, which was a large two-story structure of rough boards, occupied all of the ground floor, except a dining-room and kitchen in the rear.

Besides the bar, over which was dispensed the worst fluid lightning in the district, the apartment contained card-tables and chairs, and, as stated before, the night which opens our story finds the place well filled.

The stage-coach passengers were easily distinguished from the regular, rough-cast denizens of the town, as, with a few exceptions, they were "tender-feet" from the East, who had come West with the sanguine hope of "striking it rich" to such an extent, as to admit of their returning home in a few short months possessed of enough gold to keep them in princely style for the remainder of their lives.

Alas! what a vain hope!

Not one in ten thousand comes anywhere near having his expectations realized.

The men of Satan's Snap were not attractive enough, in general appearance, to impress a man favorably; in short, they were, as a rule, a villainous-looking lot, and that fact explained why the camp had been dubbed Satan's Snap, for truly his Satanic Majesty had struck a "snap" when he succeeded in congregating such an array of toughs, roughs and hard cases.

Accordingly, most of the newly-arrived passengers at the Black Flag held rather aloof from the crowd, not particularly fancying the grim aspect of the denizens of Satan's Snap.

Among the passengers—none of whom had signified an intention of stopping longer than morning in the camp—there were two only of whom we shall discourse in this narrative.

They were, respectively, a young woman and an oldish man, and as the woman was a supreme curiosity in Satan's Snap, it becomes us to mention her first.

To do that, we need but announce that she was none other than the famous girl sport of Far Western fame—dashing, fearless Calamity Jane, who has figured so repeatedly in the Deadwood Dick stories. And she was the same Calamity as of yore—handsome, dashing, and looking not a day older than when she grew famous with the mining incidents of the Black Hills, several years before.

Her face had lost none of its charming vivacity of expression: her eye was just as keen and penetrating; her hair flowed in a soft, rippling wave over her shoulders.

Always odd and independent as to her manner of dress, she still maintained her right to male attire.

And such a suit! The pants and vest of spotless white duck; the jacket of brown silk velvet, with satin lining, and buttons made of ten-dollar gold pieces; a "billed" shirt and collar; jaunty white slouch sombrero, rolled up at the left side, and handsome patent-leather top boots upon the small shapely feet.

Besides, she wore a belt, into which were thrust a handsome pair of self-cocking five-shooters.

From the moment of her arrival she had attracted attention, as Satan's Snap did not boast of a female resident, and many of the miners had not had a glimpse of womankind in a year or more.

Calamity's independent bearing, together with the fact that she went "heeled," prevented the miners from attempting the familiarity of self-introduction; hence, nothing was left but for the girl sport to introduce herself.

The second noticeable person of the passengers, was a tall, well-built man, of past forty years, dressed like a minister, and decidedly of ministerial aspect, inasmuch as his face was beardless, and bore a benign look.

His garments were of broadcloth, he wore a silk hat, and carried a heavy ebony cane.

When Calamity had boarded the stage, thirty miles from Satan's Snap, this clerical gentleman was already a passenger, with others, from a more eastern point, but he had, at no time during the

journey, uttered a word, and seeing he made no effort to talk, the other passengers had not disturbed him.

So his name was not known until he registered at the Black Flag, when it turned out that he was Mr. Benjamin Butterfly, of New York—a name that Calamity at once concluded was fictitious.

Calamity was standing near the entrance to the saloon, leaning idly against the wall as she puffed away at a cigarette, and took leisure note of what was going on around her, when her attention was attracted by the entrance of a person of peculiar appearance.

He was a dwarf, his stature being not over half the average height of man. His body and limbs, however, were something enormous, and a huge head sat almost upon his shoulders, so short was his bull-like neck.

His right arm was done up in a bandage, and had evidently sustained a recent injury.

In face, this dwarf was almost repulsive. His countenance was broad and his jaws powerful, the mouth huge, the teeth wolfish, the nose flat, the ears huge, the forehead protruding, with coarse overhanging brows, savage-looking eyes, and hair and stubble beard of a tow-color, that grew in all directions.

"Hello!" Calamity mused. "I wonder what crank asylum it escaped from? Ugh! what a repulsive-looking thing!"

Her thoughts, unuttered as they were, seemed to be straightway communicated to the dwarf, for he turned quickly around, with a savage growl.

"Ugly, am I?" he demanded, advancing toward Calamity, with a furious gleam in his eyes. "Repulsive am I, darn you! What d'ye mean?"

"I did not speak to you, that I'm aware of," Calamity retorted, coolly.

"Oh! didn't ye?"

"I did not."

"Ye think it, just the same, tho'. Ye sed to yourself: 'Ugh! what a repulsive-looking thing!'"

"Supposing I did? You certainly are no great shakes for beauty, that I can see!"

"That ain't none o' your bizness. Up at Pinos Pass they call me Purty Pete, an' I 'lows they know purty from humbly thar, ef you ignorant monkeys don't."

Now this was a direct insult to the men of Satan's Snap, who prided themselves on being both sharp and smart; so several of the more belligerent roughs glared at Purty Pete scowlingly.

"I don't know how much the men o' this camp know," Calamity retorted, "but I do know that you'd better not go to getting too fresh around me, or—"

"Or what?" Pete demanded, quickly.

"You'll find out. Go along about your business, or I'll slap your ugly mouth!"

"You slap my mouth?"

"Yes, I'll slap your mouth."

"You?" insinuatingly.

"You bet!" and, taking a quick step forward, Calamity Jane performed the act in the most approved manner.

Purty Pete uttered a snarl of rage, as he had to throw up his hand to save him from falling.

The bystanders applauded, while Mr. Benjamin Butterfly laid one hand upon the dwarf's shoulder.

"Look here, my friend," he said, calmly; "you ought to be ashamed of yourself for making yourself obnoxious to a defenseless young lady."

"Not a bit of it!" Purty Pete roared. "I'm a rip-roarin' scrouger from Los Pinos, an' I run this hyer country. Who aire you?"

"I am the Reverend Benjamin Butterfly, of New York, sir, and I would suggest for you to tame your ways, my friend, lest ill befall you."

"Me tame my ways—me? Why, durn yer mug, thar's nary a man ner hoss-breaker livin' as kin fetch me ter Limerick. I'm Purty Pete, ther dove-eyed duckling from Devil's Gap—ther prismatic primrose o' Pinos Pass—ther pukin' volcano o' ther Yellerstone, an' I kin show more fight per inch then airy man in this 'ere thieves'-nest. Don't yer believe et?"

"You can show more gab, no doubt!"

"Yes, an' more dust, too—more everything! I'm a rip-roarin' ramcat on ther rampage, an' I ken beat ther world. D'ye see heer?"—and, stepping to the door, he threw it open. "Out thar's me mule, who carries one hundred ounces o' gold-dust what were mined in one week, by one man, not fur from yer one hoss camp!"

"Whoop-la! It weren't Purty Pete as mined et, tho'—nixee! These 'ere paws o' mine weren't never cut out for menial labor. Ther galoot as mined that gold tho't he hed a snap, but I pinched ther dust off'm him, an' heer I am ter bet I kin lick ary galoot in ther camp one-handed! First come, first served. A hundred ounces o' pure dust thet sez thet Purty Pete, the pride o' Pinos Pass, can knock ther socks off from any two-legged galoot thet breathes ther mounting air. Put up yer dust, an' don't all speak ter onc't!"

And the dwarf glared defiantly and eagerly around, to see if any of the sons of Satan's Snap were inclined to take him up.

But it seemed not; the assemblage eyed the riotous stranger in grim silence.

"Ho! ho! So I'm ther king heer, aire I? There's no one in yer ourag-outang camp who durst step up an' rub ther fuzz on me cheek, is thar?" he roared. "I'm ther high cockolorum o' ther occasion!"

"Not while I'm around, my beauty!" cried a ringing voice, as a young man of sportive appearance stepped across the threshold into the room.

"If you are really sp'iling for a fight, I'm ther very chap as can accommodate you to a dot!"

Calamity Jane gave a little cry of surprise as her

gaze fell upon the new-comer, who was none other than her husband, the dashing Western detective prince and ex-road-agent, Deadwood Dick—just back from his lively crusade in the Eastern metropolis—New York.

CHAPTER II.

HALTED ON HORSEBACK.

THE sudden appearance of Deadwood Dick upon the scene was a source of great surprise and pleasure to Calamity, for she had not expected him, for a couple of weeks yet, and at a more northern mining-camp.

They both saw and recognized each other at the same instant, but refrained from giving open expression to their joy at reunion in the presence of the crowd, for Dick immediately gave his attention to the hideous dwarf.

Purty Pete was regarding him with a greenish sort of glitter in his evil eyes—taking a close inventory, as it were, of the detective's vulnerable points.

"Well, sir, what do you think about it—think you'd like to have a scrap with me?" Dick demanded, good-naturedly. "If so, begin to put up your gold."

"Yas, I'd jest as lief pound ther mug off of you as ary other man. Hev you got a thousand dollars?"

"I have that same."

"Then, I'll bet my hundred ounces o' gold, ag'in' yer 'thousan'. Is et a go?"

"Most assuredly. I suppose you want to fight with pistols, as your right hand appears to be injured?"

"Nary time! My right hand ain't no good, but ef I can't slug ther mug off'n you wi' me left, then I'm no good!"

"Correct. I'll try to convince you that you are no good. Produce your dust an' let's see that it is the genuine article."

With an unintelligible grunt, the dwarf left the Black Flag.

The excitement within the saloon was now waxing warm, for the prospect of a prize-fight was particularly exhilarating to the average citizen of Satan's Snap.

Deadwood Dick was regarded with a good deal of curiosity by the *habitués* of the saloon, for it was easy to see that he was athletic and wiry, and likely to prove a formidable antagonist.

Those who were anxious to witness an out-and-out prize-fight for a given sum, were not destined to have their desires gratified.

Purty Pete came tearing into the saloon, a few minutes later, the picture of furious rage.

"Robbers! thieves!" he roared. "I've been robbed an' I demand satisfaction o' this hyer camp! My hundred ounces o' gold hev bin stolen from me saddle-bags, an' I'll make this town a graveyard, ef I don't git 'em back. Show me ther cursed galoot w'ot stole my gold, while I cut his weasand!"

"How do you know you've been robbed?" French Ferd, proprietor of the Black Flag, demanded, pushing forward. "Who said you'd been robbed?"

"I sed so—I know et!" retorted the dwarf. "I hed one hundred ounces o' gold in me saddle-bag, when I entered this yers shebang, an' now et's gone. Ef I don't git back me gold, I'll send yer durned thievin' town up in a cloud o' smoke, surer'n my name is Purty Pete!"

"None o' yer threats around here. I run this burg, my sawed-off piece o' bluster, an' ef there's been any thievery goin' on, it shall be investigated, fer we don't allow no light-finger bizness 'round here. Whar's yer mule?"

"Outside ther door."

"And you say ye left a hundred ounces o' gold in yer saddle-bags?"

"You bet yer sweet life!"

"How did you come to do that? Ye was mighty careless, 'pears ter me."

"I wanted ter size up this hyer shebang 'fore I fetched et in. Didn't look like a werry safe place to fetch so much dust inter."

"Curse yer impudence, I've a mind ter choke ye fer yer insinuation 'g'in' ther high character o' my hotel. I'm cussed ef I believe you had any gold at all."

"Nor I!" chimed in Dick.

"Ye'r liars! I did have gold!" stoutly asserted Pete.

The next instant a blow from French Ferd's fist laid the dwarf on his back.

It did not stun him, however, and he quickly gained his feet.

"I'll fix ye all fer this," he roared, furiously. "Ye'll find Purty Pete ain't no fool ter be robbed and knocked down."

"Shet up, or I'll give et to ye ag'in!" French Ferd declared, gruffly. "You've got too much slack ter thrive in this camp, me man. An', after we investigate this robbery business, about ther best thing you can do is to get up and mosey to some other camp. Now, then, is there any one in this room who knows anything about this chap's alleged gold?"

"I presume I can throw all the necessary light on that subject, that will be needed!" Deadwood Dick said, quietly. "The fellow's gold—or rather my gold—was removed from the saddle-bag, by my hands!"

"Ho! ho!" roared Purty Pete, dancing about, "I'll—"

"You keep quiet!" thundered French Ferd; then turning to Dick:

"Explain, sir. How is the gold yours?"

"Because I mined it, and *cached* it. This rascal robbed the *cache* and fled, with a bullet wound in his arm, caused by my rifle-shot. I followed the trail, and just chanced to arrive here, in time to overhaul him."

"Et's a lie! et's a lie!" roared the dwarf. "Me an' another feller played keards for it, an' I scooped the boodle."

"That is very unlikely!" French Ferd declared. "Where did you mine this gold, stranger?"

"At a claim that I staked out, over a week ago." "The deuce! A hundred ounces o' dust in a week? Waal I should smile ef thet ain't great, fer placer. Whar aire ye located, pardner?" and French Ferd was the picture of sudden-wrought eagerness.

Not less interest had been aroused among the rough patrons, who crowded around, anxious to get the details of where the new find was located, for it was no secret that Satan's Snap was not paying any fortunes to its laborers.

They needed but the news of a new strike, to pull up stakes and make a stampede.

As for Deadwood Dick, he took time to strike a match on his heel, and light a cigar, before he made answer to French Ferd's inquiry.

"I am not inclined to give out the whereabouts of my claim, as long as I can help it, for it is my individual property, by right of staking, and if it continues to pay for the working, I shall secure legal rights to it, from the Government."

"Indeed! I don't know 'bout that. 'Tain't fair to play hog about such matters. A feller might want too much of a good thing, an' keep other fellers whar are as good as him, on the verge o' starvation. Thet ain't square, nohow, is it boyees?"

"No! no!" assented a chorus. "Ef ther feller hes struck er rich, he orter tell us where it is."

"You are very much in the wrong. Findings is keepings, so far as gold-mines are concerned, and I intend to keep my claim. When I am done with it, I don't care how many invaders come!" Dick cried.

"You won't tell us, then?" French Ferd demanded, viciously.

"No, sir, I will not!"

"Well, I presume there's a way of making you tell!"

"None that I am aware of. As for forcing me to tell, that is a thing entirely out of the question. If you receive information from this wretch"—indicating the dwarf—"I'll put a bullet through him for telling you. If you succeed in finding my claim in any other manner, all I ask of you is to keep off of it. I've no objections to your staking off as much land as you choose adjacent to my lot, but I warn you not to attempt to take a shovelful of dirt off my locate."

"And you've got the sublime nerve to believe that I—or any of the boys, for that matter—would heed your bombastic order?"

"You would consult your interests best by doing so, I assure you."

"Bah! you are a consummate puppy!"

"You are not man enough to back it."

"What?"

"You heard the gentle murmur of my bazzoo!"

"You think I am afraid of a young banty like you?"

"I do."

With a savage snarl French Ferd quickly advanced and aimed a fearful blow full at Deadwood Dick's head.

It did not hit its mark, however, but, instead, Dick's fist made an uppercut, and caught Ferd with sufficient force upon the side of the neck to send him spinning back against the bar.

Recovering himself quickly, the ruffian, who was considerably taller and broader than the sport, made a second lunge.

Dick did not move a peg, but at precisely the proper moment, both his knotted fists shot out like howitzer shots.

His right blow struck French Ferd full between the eyes, and the left in the pit of the stomach, both of which served to knock the proprietor of the Black Flag in a promiscuous heap on the floor, from which he made no attempt to rise.

"At him, boys!" he groaned. "Ef one can't lick him a dozen o' you can!"

"Yes! come on!" Dick yelled, his mind made up to the fact that he would have to fight his way out, for he saw nothing now of Calamity. "Pitch in, and see how many o' you cusses I can knock out!"

Some half a dozen roughs leaped forward, Purty Pete among the rest.

The others appeared to hold back, as if to see how the first brigade got treated.

With his nerves drawn to their utmost tension, Dick squared off, and when the onslaught came, his fists played through the air fast and fierce.

With half a dozen knotted fists aiming heavy blows at him it seemed impossible that he could stand before the odds more than half a minute.

Yet he did so, and one by one the men tumbled to the floor beneath his terrific strokes, then, when the last one had dropped, he whipped a pair of revolvers from his belt and leveled them at the crowd.

"Back!" he cried. "The first man who attempts to prevent my departure, dies!" and, keeping the audience covered, he backed toward the door, opened it, and leaped out into the night, followed by a volley of bullets and the vengeful yells of the crowd.

Running down the main street, toward the end of the camp, he reached the spot where he had tied his horse.

"Quick! into the saddle, and off we go!" she cried. "This seems like old times, eh?"

"I should smile. How's the camp fixed for horses?"

"Pretty solid. I borrowed this from among a dozen others."

"Then give the spurs. We must get out of here, for there will be the dickens to pay after this."

And away they dashed, at a swift gallop, up the

gulch, which ran between two pine-studded, towering mountains.

The night was oppressively hot, there being but little breeze stirring, and which seemed to blow down from some burning volcano.

Both Dick's horse and that of Calamity Jane were animals of good speed and endurance, and they tore over the ground rapidly.

There was a bright moon, and before the fugitives were out of sight of the mining camp they were able to discover that pursuit had already been started by at least a dozen horsemen.

The moonlight glistened upon the pursuers, showing that they were armed.

"Let 'em come!" Dick said, with a wild laugh. "We'll show 'em our heels, till our horses play out, and if I mistake not, by that time they will have lost track of us."

"How far away is your new find?" Calamity asked.

"Oh! about ten miles, but not easy to find. If that dwarf don't give it away, the Snappers will have one good time finding my new city, Lovely Layout!"

"Is that what you have named it?"

"Yes."

"I like the name. But, may be things won't turn out so lovely. How did you come to find it?"

"I was working northward, on horseback, ultimately intending to join you, when, one day, I found in a lonely gorge, a beautiful hand and wrist, which had once belonged to a young lady, but, now, marble-like and perfect as if it had become petrified. To the wrist was attached a silver, strong-linked chain, two feet long, one end being tightly secured to the wrist by the linkshaving become imbedded in the flesh, while the other end was pinned to a tree by a stiletto!"

"The discovery was in a locality miles from human habitation, and the strange mystery, impressed me so much that I took the hand, chain, and knife along with me. A few nights later, I struck a town, and laid the hand upon a table in my room. The next morning—"

Just at this juncture their horses were seized by the bit, and hurled back upon their haunches.

"Whoa! there—be aisy now, an' 'f ye can't be aisy, be's aisy as ye can! Could yez be affther tellin' a couple av gintleman phere the nixt place is, an' how many moiles from here, yer Honor?" cried a Celtic voice.

CHAPTER III.

MORMON BILL'S CAPTIVES.

Not more than fifteen miles north of Satan's Snap among other towering mountain peaks, was one with a flat top—as level as a floor, and comprising some two or three acres of surface. This peak was much higher than any of its immediate neighbors, and from it a view most grand and awe-inspiring could be had of the surrounding, rugged landscape, for miles upon miles—rugged and scantily timbered peaks, deep, awful gorges and canyons and abysses—here and there a little lakelet, and many a dashing mountain torrent, and cascade, that sparkled brightly in the sunlight.

Although the sides of this mountain were very precipitous and rugged, and in places dangerous of ascent, a rude trail, scarcely more than a bear path, ran up from the bottom, or rather, from the gulch on the northern and western sides, which formed its base.

Singular as it might seem, there was located on the flat top of this mountain, over which many an aerial storm tore with unabated fury, a white man's camp.

There was but one building, and this, one story in height, covering nearly half an acre's area, and massively built of heavy rock.

It must indeed be a fierce storm that could move this extensive structure from its foundation, and its log roof was additionally secured by flat rocks and cross-trees.

The only windows were round, bucket-sized loop-holes near the roof, and but one doorway formed a mode of entrance, there being no door, whatever.

It is to this singular aerial resort we would conduct the reader on the morning following the events last narrated.

About the plaza, without the stone fortress—for such it really resembled, half a dozen men were moving about, attending to a like number of horses, who were browsing upon boughs and grass, that had been transported to the mountain-top, for feed.

The men were engaged in currying and rubbing down the horses, as if preparing them for a journey, and a fine sextette of equines they were.

Saddle trappings which lay near at hand, were elaborate and of the Spanish order.

The men were able-bodied fellows, ranging in age from twenty-five to thirty-five years, and were attired as mountain rangers.

Rifles were stacked near where they were at work, and belts, equipped with revolvers and knives, lay near the saddle trappings.

At the entrance to the fortress stood a seventh man, of more grim and forbidding aspect, who was evidently doing guard duty.

Let us look within the stone structure.

Here we find one large room, with doorways opening into four smaller ones.

In the center of the main apartment a fire of pine cones burns, giving warmth to the interior.

Seated near this fire were four persons, upon blocks of stone—for there was not a piece of wooden furniture in the place, the tables being constructed of stone slabs, the stools of rock, and the beds being simply bear and wolf-skins.

The persons seated around the fire were prisoners and, more than that, evidently were strangers to this part of the country.

Perhaps most noticeable of the quartette was the eldest person, a woman of some sixty years.

She was of good figure and stately presence, and had by no means lost all the beauty of her younger years. Her face was yet round, matronly and shrewd of expression, and her silvery hair seemed to detract nothing from her imposing appearance.

She was attired in a plain and serviceable riding-habit, which, however, was of expensive material, and wore diamond earrings, and finger-rings of much value.

The second one of the party was a young lady of some two-and-twenty years, quite frail of figure, and possessed of a doll-baby sort of face, which was pretty, after a fashion, but told plainly enough that the owner was not in good health.

She, too, was dressed in a rich riding-habit, and wore rich, diamond-set jewelry.

Party number three was a handsome young fellow of about seven and twenty, of fine form, with a prepossessing countenance, blonde hair and mustache, and brilliant eyes.

He appeared of an easy-going, indolent disposition and might be either a gentleman of leisure or a devil-may-care adventurer and sport.

The fourth party was a young negro, attired in livery, who evidently was the valet of the other three.

These four persons who sat by the fire, had their hands tied behind their backs, and as the guard, with his repeating-rifle, blockaded the entrance to the building, they were virtually prisoners.

They were the only occupants of the prison, if such it might be termed, but their anxious glances toward the door evidenced that they were expecting the arrival of some one.

The morning had not long passed when a man entered the fortress and approached the prisoners.

He was tall and gracefully proportioned, and handsome, in a way, with his round, dusky face, black eyes, and well-trained mustache of a like hue.

He was dressed in the same ranger costume as the men on the plateau, except that his hat was of wider rim, and a fine plush cloak was thrown back over his shoulders.

His belt weapons were of better pattern and finish.

"Ladies and gents, at your service!" he said, as he paused near the fire. "I am considerably surprised to find the fort honored with guests. I did not learn of your capture until my arrival on the mountain just now. May I inquire whom I have the honor of addressing?"

"I am Mrs. Seybert, of New York," the elderly lady spoke up, with a spice of indignation in her tone. "This young lady is my niece, Geraldine Granville, and the young man is my son, Thomas."

"Ah! yes—I see. I am most happy to meet you," and the new-comer doffed his hat, graciously. "I am Lieutenant Lily, of Mormon Bill's Rangers, and, as the captain is absent, shall be pleased to act in his place."

"Do we understand, then, that this is a robbers' stronghold—a thieves' den?" Mrs. Seybert demanded, with rising temper.

"You do, in peace!" the lieutenant said, with the coolest of assurance. "We are a regularly-organized and ordained band of gentlemen, who make it our point to derive a revenue from others who are well able to supply our demands. Our captain, Mormon Bill, is a regular king among the crooked, and when he plans to make a haul, he never comes out short of his mark. Where did our boys over-haul you? And at the same time let me ask who are you—what are you doing in this wild country?"

"We are a party who have been spending several months in seeing the sights in the far West. There were more of us, until about a week ago, when the main body of our party concluded to return East, as they were tired of roughing it. We were then at Camp Clark, and as I was desirous of working south to Maricopas, on the Southern Pacific Railroad, I engaged a couple of men, who represented themselves as conversant with the route, to guide us."

"These men were respectively an Irishman and a Dutchman, were they not?"

"They were. But how did you know?"

"Oh! easily enough. They're Mormon Bill's two decoy ducks, and good ducks they are, too. You see, Mormon Bill ain't here at headquarters much, but leaves things to me, knowing I'm as honest and trusty as a church contribution-box. So the captain roams around from place to place, keeping watch for fat hauls and fat travelers, and soon as he gets 'em sized up he puts Dutchy and Irish onto 'em, and they run 'em right into our power. Then we relieve 'em of their wealth, and generally let 'em loose among the mountains."

"Terrible!" Miss Granville ventured to announce, looking decidedly shocked.

"An outrage, you mean!" declared Mrs. Seybert. "Thomas, why don't you say something to this awful man?"

"It has not occurred to me that it would do any good to say anything!" Thomas responded, with a yawn. "We're in a fix, mammy, and the only thing to do is to get out of it in the best way we can."

"Nonsense! you haven't the spunk of a mouse in you, Thomas Seybert! If you had, you'd tell this ruffian what you thought of him!"

"And get laughed at for his pains!" Lieutenant Lily assured, with a chuckle. "I see, my dear madam, that your early learning, as regards outlaws, has been sadly neglected. You and your companions are prisoners for the time being in one of the most invulnerable outlaw camps in the world, and all your jawing and spluttering will avail you nothing. I shall take possession of all your valuables, and when I have received orders for your release, from the captain, you will most likely be set

at liberty. Walking is good, and if you have ever had any practice on the race-track, you may be able to get back to New York by snow-fall."

"Oh, you nasty, horrid brute! Oh, you vile, contemptible, good-for-nothing wretch!" burst forth Mrs. Seybert.

"The monster!" breathed Miss Granville.

"You'd better save some of those pet names for another time. I should say," Lieutenant Lily smiled. "You may encounter some one before you get out of the wilderness on whom they will have more effect than on me. Please let me have your several pocket-books now?"

"What?"

"Your pocket-books—in fact, all the valuables you have on your persons."

"Never!" Mrs. Seybert gasped—"never!"

"Oh! yes you will; you will have to. If you don't give them up willingly, you will only be forced to the indignity of being searched."

"Yes, mother," Tom Seybert said; "there's no use of resistance, and the only thing left for us is to do as we are ordered."

"You're quite sensible," Lily complimented. "We shall have your valuables, and you will save yourselves trouble by delivering them up without any foolishness."

"How do you suppose one's to deliver anything up with their hands tied?" Mrs. Seybert demanded, snappishly. "You haven't as much sense as a snipe."

"Oh! I'll release your hands long enough for that," Lily assured, and he suited the action to the word, by cutting the thongs that held her wrists in confinement.

"Now your pocket-book, madam!"

And a revolver in his hand showed that he was ready to check any attempt at escape.

The purse was produced and handed over, and a well-filled one it was too, which caused the lieutenant's eyes to sparkle as he glanced into it.

"Have you no more than this?—none stowed away in your corsets—or in your stockings?"

"No, I haven't! That's every cent I have—over three thousand dollars."

"Oh, well, that's not such a bad sort of a haul. Now, your finger-rings, your earrings, and your watch!"

Flushed with anger, Mrs. Seybert had no course but to obey; and Lily shoved the things into his pocket with as little concern as though they had been so many copper pennies.

Geraldine was likewise relieved of her valuables, and then Tom Seybert; after which Snow, the valet, contributed to the haul the magnificent sum of two dollars and a half.

Lieutenant Lily chuckled.

"This is the fattest haul we have made for some time, and Mormon Bill will be greatly pleased. I am ever so much obliged to you for these tokens of your appreciation, I can assure you, and if we should ever reverse matters, as they stand now, you can bleed me of my wealth, and I'll never utter a protest."

"Very likely we shall not turn road-agent very soon!" Tom Seybert declared. "And now, having deprived us of our valuables, are you not going to liberate us?"

"I am not sure about that yet."

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot order your release until I have received instructions from Mormon Bill, by messenger. They are liable to come at any minute, and if he says let you go, go you shall, as you are of no earthly use around here now."

Just then a carrier pigeon flew into the room, and, after making several circles about it, lit upon Lieutenant Lily's shoulder.

"A message from the captain!" he said, removing a paper that had been attached to the wing. "Let's see what he says."

He unfolded and read the document, after which he gave vent to a surprised whistle.

"The captain's orders are that you are to remain here indefinitely," he said. "Or, better still, I will read you what he says:

"NEAR SATAN'S SNAP, A. T.,
August 20th.

"LIEUTENANT LILY:—If you have captured Mrs. Seybert, Miss Granville and Thomas Seybert, all of New York, hold them, after relieving them of all their valuables, until you receive further notice from me. I intend to get a handsome ransom for them, and to that end have telegraphed John Seybert, who is rich, to come on at once. Expect him shortly. So take good care the game don't escape. Send this note back by carrier, with 'all right' marked on it, if all is right.

"Yours till death,

"MORMON BILL."

"And as all is right," continued Lily, "back goes another pigeon, and you may as well make up your mind to sojourn for some time at Fort Freeze-Out—which is this same 'way-up camp!'"

CHAPTER IV.

EN ROUTE TO LOVELY LAYOUT.

THE sudden standstill to which the horses of Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane had been brought, showed that the man at the bits was possessed of a strong arm.

At the instant the fugitives were passing through a portion of the gulch where the darkness was intense, so that they were unable to perceive the style of man they had to contend with.

Dick, however, quickly drew and cocked his revolver, Calamity following his example.

"Hands off, and get out of the way!" Dick cried, in a tone of menacing command. "What d'ye

mean by stopping my horses? Out of the way, I say, or I'll shoot you so full of holes you'll answer for a sieve."

"Arrah, now, and yez wouldn't be after doin' that, would yez? Be aisy, sir, be aisy. It's no trouble we'd be after givin' yez at all, at all, more than to ax yez fer direction as regards to where we are."

"Where you are? Why, are you lost?"

"Shure, an' et's lost we are, an' divil a wan av us knows which way we be goin'."

"How many are there of you?"

"There be but tow av us, sure—meself and Limburger Jakie. Me own name is Dennis Doyle, or Dancin' Dennis, an' shure there's divil a wan kin beat the loikes av me at dancin' a jig."

"What the blazes do you suppose I care about your dancing propensities? Who are you, and what are you doing here—where do you belong? Be lively, now! I've no time to jabber with you."

"Be aisy, now! Don't be gittin' ompatient, me laddy buck. We be tow servants, yer honor, phat's lost from the bosom av our family. We be the servants av the Missus Seybert, sure, who was thravelin' through the mountains wid her son and her niece. The robbers attacked our party, bad luck to 'em, an' took 'em all prisoners but meself and Limburger, d'ye see, an' told us to take a shneak, bedad, as we were no good. Thin they left us in the mountains, an' divil a wan c'u'd we tell which way to go. So if you could tell the likes av us where we'll be foindin' lodgin' fer the night, it's much obliged we will be, yer honor."

"Yaw, dat ish so," a Teutonic voice chimed. "Ve vas so hungry and starved as never vas."

"This is rather a queer story!" Dick said. "What was your mistress doing in this wild region?"

"She vas travelin' for her health, an' the magnificence av tha scenery, shure. She be a rich lady av New York, yer honor, an' she thravels all over, wherever she p'lases."

Down the gulch Dick fancied he could hear the faint sounds of the pursuers' approach; so it would not do to tarry longer, in conversation with these two alleged lost servants.

"Well, my men, all I know for you to do, is do the best you can. We are followed by a band of ruffians, and if we are caught, they'll make mince-meat of us. So, take care of yourselves—out of the way, there!" and with this caution Dick applied spurs to his horse, and broke away, Calamity doing likewise.

"Arrah! bedad, we hev horses, an' it's not goin' to be left behind we are!" yelled the Irishman. "We will go 'long wid yez, an' ef et comes ter fightin' you'll find us a hull regiment wid a battery throwed in. Onter yer baste, Dutchy, ye beer-barrel!"

And a moment later, the two men were mounted and following close at the heels of Dick and Calamity.

"Blame it, I do not fancy the idea of these fellows following us!" Dick growled. "There's no telling who they are."

"True, but how are we going to help ourselves?" Calamity replied. "There's no way except to shoot them, and we might be harming innocent men. On the other hand, by making friends with them, we may be able to utilize them, in a case of necessity."

"Perhaps. I see no way but to let them follow us."

"Are you going direct to your 'locate'?"

"Not direct, but by a roundabout way. I hope by a sudden movement to throw the pursuers off the track, before long."

On! on! they dashed, at a gallop, up the gulch, whose grim, rocky sides rose high toward the heavens.

Every little ways transverse ravines and gorges branched off into the mountainous labyrinths.

Fast though the two fugitives rode, they could not gain much on the Irishman and Dutchman, who brought up the rear rapidly, plainly being mounted upon good horses.

Fully five miles of distance had been traversed since leaving Satan's Snap when Deadwood Dick drew rein. It was at a point where a transverse ravine crossed their trail at right angles—a deep narrow passage between perpendicular walls of towering rock—a thoroughfare, dark and forbidding, whose entire bottom was covered with a noisy but shallow stream of swift-running water.

"Here is where we turn off!" Dick said. "We shall have to ride in single file, down-stream, as the ravine is quite narrow in places. At this point, our pursuers will have been baffled."

"How so?" Calamity inquired.

"Because if the dwarf leads them, he will lead them up the stream instead of down it," Dick replied, whereupon he guided his horse into the water, and rode into the dark passage.

Calamity followed, and the Irishman and Dutchman fetched up the rear.

The ravine appeared to run in a straight course, although it was hard to tell for a certainty, as the darkness was complete.

After a while the passage grew wider, overhead, and consequently a little lighter; then, Deadwood Dick's followers were able to perceive that the ravine was making a sharp curve to the left, the entire bottom still being covered by the noisy creek.

Still Deadwood Dick led on, for what must have been two miles or more, ere he drew rein, and allowed the others to come up.

At the point where he had halted, the moon shone down into the fissure, from overhead, quite brightly, and Dick made the pause, in order to see what sort of looking fellows Dennis and Jakie really were.

As they came up, he saw that they were typical specimens of their nationalities.

The Irishman was a tall, gaunt yet muscular fellow, with the map of Ireland indelibly engraven upon his face. There was nothing about him that particularly marked him from a hundred-and-one other Irishmen, except it was that he had a rather villainous pair of eyes.

Limburger Jake was a man of tremendous girth, and rather a comical looking chap, every bit as Dutch looking as Dennis was Irish.

Both were roughly attired, a fact that struck Dick as curious, if they were, as they had represented, a lady's servants.

They were well armed, too, with repeating rifles and revolvers, and their horses were fine animals.

"If I mistake not those fellows have been lying to me," Dick mused. "But, I'll watch 'em and see what gam they are up to. If they pan out crooked, they'll find they're barking up the wrong tree."

When he had finished his inspection of the pair, he turned to Calamity, and said:

"We are now but a short distance from our destination, and yet, the most remarkable part of our journey is yet to be made. You remember I said, before leaving the main gulch, that the dwarf would most likely lead our pursuers up the stream of the ravine, instead of down-stream?"

"Yes."

"Well, the up-stream course would take them direct to Lovely Layout, which is where my claim is located. Lovely Layout is only about two miles from where we left the gulch, going up-stream. Coming down-stream, we have gone about six miles, and by following this curving ravine, are also in the vicinity of Lovely Layout. Ahead, yonder, a little ways, this ravine ends, in the face of a mountain wall, and there we find a natural tunnel under the mountain, of sufficient size to admit of our passage on horseback. The creek flows through this tunnel for a mile, passing directly in under the main gulch, from which we first debouched, and finally flows out over a ledge on the mountain-side, into a pocket, fifty or sixty feet below—one of the fairest walled pockets of all Arizona. Which same is Lovely Layout. Come!"

He led the way, riding leisurely.

Rounding the curve a few yards, they came to the end of the ravine proper, a gigantic wall of rock rising before them, in the base of which was a dark round opening, which, as Dick had said, was sufficiently large to admit of the passage of a man on horseback.

It, apparently, ran down-grade, for the waters rushed into it, with a sullen roar.

Dick rode fearlessly into this dark passage, however, and nothing was left for the others but to follow.

Once within the densely dark conduit, the noise of the waters under foot was greatly increased, and the voyageurs were surrounded in a bath of mist.

A mile of this sort of journey rather suggested the idea of going into another world through darkness; but the monotony was finally relieved by their debouching into a large cavern, through which the stream flowed in a narrower channel than it had hitherto occupied.

Here they rode out of the stream on to the dry rocky bottom of the cavern, and dismounted, Dick applying a match to a heap of resinous fagots, and soon having a bright light, which fully illuminated their surroundings.

"Here our journey ends, for the present!" he said, "as we are within a stone's throw of Lovely Layout."

The stream crossed the floor of this subterranean chamber, and disappeared through a narrow aperture in the rocks, too small for a person to crawl through. Further than this there appeared to be no visible way of communication with the outer world, in the direction whither the stream disappeared.

Dick did not seem inclined to point out such a way, either, for he unsaddled his own and Calamity's horses, and lariat-ed them out, at one side of the cavern, Dennis and Jakie doing the same.

Dick then produced a coffee-pot, from a secret recess, and some hard-tack, dried buffalo meat and cheese, and in half an hour's time had quite a little repast ready, of which he and Calamity first partook, after which the two followers were apprised that they could have what remained.

"Shure, an' it's a gentleman ye aire!" Dancing Dennis declared, "an' we'll try to repay yez for yer kindness, will we not, Dutchy?"

"You ped your sweet life we vill!" Jakie replied, making a grab, and securing the lion's share of the provender for himself. "I neffer vas so hungry in my life."

And it would seem that he spoke the truth, the way he got outside the scant allowance.

"Bedad, it's meself as is wishin' meself an' tha poor mistress was back in New York!" Dennis declared. "Faith we had a plinty to ate an' drink, there!"

"It seems strange so small a party of people should attempt to travel through the wilds of Arizona, without proper escort!" Dick observed, lighting a cigar. "You say, this Mrs. Seybert, her son and niece, hail from New York?"

"Yis, sur."

"Has she a husband living there?"

"Yis, sur."

"Engaged in business?"

"Shure, an' he's not. He's a retired merchant, and lives at his aise."

"How is it he did not accompany his wife, on her Western trip?"

"That's a family matter, sur, an' divil a bit I know about it, at all, at all."

"Neider was I!" put in Jakie.
 "You say your party were captured by robbers?"

"All except meself an' Jakie, yer honor. We was ridin' along through the gulch, about tin miles from where we met yez, whin a band o' tin masked horsemen suddintly surrounded us, an' tuk tha leddies an' Mister Tom, an' rid off. They wouldn't take us, because they sed we were civil a bit o' good, an' they told us ef we followed 'em they'd be afther blowin' the top off tha tow av us. So we didn't follow."

"Vell I should snigger!" assented Jakie.

"When did this happen?"

"This 'evenin', yer honor, jist before dark."

"Did Mrs. Seybert have much money with her?"

"Faith, shure an' she did, sur. She had dead lashins av it, an' jewelry, an' the devil knows what all."

"Where were you traveling to, when you met the robbers?"

"Divil a wan I kin tell yez. The misthress sed whin we left Camp Clark, she was goin' to Mari-ca-coopos, or some other place, where the stame cars ware."

Dick propounded but a few more questions, and, shortly afterward, he and Calamity withdrew to another part of the cavern.

"What do you make of them?" Calamity asked, with some anxiety.

"I've hardly settled upon an opinion," Dick responded.

"The Irishman tells a plausible story, and it may be true, but again, it may not be. These chaps may be a cunning pair of rogues, who have some prime object in following us here."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Keep a narrow watch upon them, and shoot them down, at the first evidence of treachery. They may be pals of the dwarf, or may have followed us with the hope that, by robbing us, they would get enough money to pay them for their pains."

"One of us will have to keep awake then?"

"Yes. I will sleep upon my saddle, with one eye open. If they really go to sleep, we will try to secure them against doing us any harm."

"Do you think men of Satan's Snap have invaded your valley?"

"Yes, but we can tell better when it comes mornin'."

"And, if they have taken possession—what then?"

"Then it shall be war to the knife! Those who seek to make homes and fortunes in Lovely Layout will feel the iron grip of Deadwood Dick. It may be my last campaign, but I'll not be driven from my rights, this time, without a bitter fight, which shall strike terror to those who would oppose or wrong me."

The words came from between his lips fiercely, and his eyes blazed with the spirit of old.

Calamity knew that the threat was not an idle boast—that they came from his heart.

They went back to the fire, and preparations were made for a night's rest; but, though Dick laid down, he did not sleep. He was awake and watchful, and before the night was half spent he accomplished his purpose.

The hard breathing of the two strangers told that they were sound asleep, and noiselessly, and without in the least disturbing their slumbers, Dick securely bound them hand and foot.

Thus, they were practically powerless to do any harm, which Dick knew was imperative. A bitter struggle was before him and it was necessary to anticipate any treachery that might betray him into the hands of his enemies.

CHAPTER V. GROGVILLE.

Just one month later.

And a change of scene.

The newly-developed Eldorado of Arizona.

And the new "city" of Grogville!

In one of the most beautiful mountain-walled pockets of Arizona, nestled the new mining-camp—"city," it called itself—Grogville City; but, of course, it had few if any claims to being classed as a city, more than that it was a red-hot mining settlement, daily growing in population and importance, and like all gold-fever places, was willing to bet that it was the fastest camp on the range.

The "pocket," or locked valley, proper, comprised several hundred acres, the slopes being grandly adapted for grazing and agriculture, while the bottom was of a sandy formation, the "wash" of a myriad of centuries no doubt.

A mountain stream fell in a beautiful cascade at one side of this pocket, and running to near its center, was absorbed by the earth, and abruptly disappeared from view, finding egress, no doubt, by some underground channel.

Timber grew at one side of the pocket—in fact it was a most admirable "find," surrounded by stupendous mountains that raised their cold gray spires toward the heavens.

This pocket was what the reader had heard Deadwood Dick mention, in preceding chapters, as Lovely Layout—then uninhabited, and without a single building of any sort.

But now, after a month's lapse of time, we behold a vast change—a transformation so great as to seem almost incredible—more like some vivid dream than a reality.

We behold the new city of Grogville, the placer mining camp of the range.

We behold new cabins, frame and slab shanties, and little white tents dotted about promiscuously—perhaps a hundred, perhaps more.

These are all tenanted, while other similar places

of abode and business are being rapidly rushed up by a force of new-comers—all helping their friends or pards.

There is the usual main street, which bustles with all the exciting varieties of business and life peculiar to every mining town.

Two rival shanty hotels glare across the street at each other—barn-like structures, capable of holding a great number of patrons, and each eager to capture the lion's share of the trade.

Then there are stores, shooting-galleries, gaming-rooms, dance-houses, a bank, or, more properly, a "mining exchange," and saloons, a dozen at least—hence the name, Grogville, suggested by the foremost and wealthiest citizen, the Honorable Ferdinand French, otherwise French Fred, formerly of Satan's Snap.

Much of the building material now in Grogville City recently belonged to Satan's Snap, of which a month-ago camp scarcely a vestige now remained.

There are women, too, in Grogville, some of them miners' wives or daughters, but for the most part adventuresses, drawn hither by the reputed present and future wealth of the camp.

There are no crushers and smelting apparatus, because there is no especial need for such. Prospecting has developed that all the gold in the vicinity is in the lands and sands of the pocket, in dust or nugget condition.

Hence, beginning at the southern and only known entrance to the placer, the camp follows the slopes to the right and left, and the bottom is left for mining or sluicing operations.

In the bottom miners toil day by day, in the sands, with pick, pan and shovel; there are innumerable sluiceways and conduits, and cradles, for washing, leading from the pathway of the crystal stream that pours down from a ledge fifty feet above the town into the valley.

And here, where Deadwood Dick claimed supremacy, by right of discovery, was this bustling town of Grogville, which everybody voted had a future before it such as no other placer town ever had.

Every stage brought in a load of people, and others came in trains and singly.

The only way, so far as these mortals knew, of reaching the town, was by following up-stream from the big gulch; but, fortunately, the bottom of the creek had been worn so level that vehicles found no difficulty in reaching the locate.

And having said so much for the town, let us, before proceeding further, take a brief glance at the *dramatis personae*; for it is here occurred the principal events upon which this romance is founded.

As we have said, Ferdinand French was one of the foremost personages in the camp.

It was he who had led the first party into the pocket, and made the initiatory steps toward starting the camp. He had staked out the bottom into lots, and then, in a very few days, arranged for the migration and a boom.

Satisfied as to the richness of the deposit, he had not, as many another man would have done, sold off the lots, but had offered them for rent, or a percentage. It was generally conceded that the dozen odd men who had originally accompanied him into the pocket, in search of Deadwood Dick, were his partners, but this was not known to be a fact.

French had money, and had supplied it liberally to transport the material of Satan's Snap to the new diggings, and to encourage the growth and enterprise of the new camp; hence he was looked upon as its founder and most important citizen.

Said those who ought to know, he derived a certain profitable revenue from nearly every business occupation in the camp, and was growing rapidly rich.

He owned one of the two hotels, known as the Casino; also the mining exchange, and had a finger in almost every pie, so to speak.

It was no secret that French Ferd had many enemies in the mining towns of the West, and that he really stood in fear of being shot at any moment. Hence, he had surrounded himself with a kind of body-guard, who kept an eye on his movements, and were always near to fight in his defense, if necessary, and who also kept an eye on every new arrival in the camp, and reported every suspicious personage to French himself.

This body-guard had for its captain no less a personage than Party Pet, the ugly dwarf, who now had become French Ferd's right-hand man.

Next to French Ferd, the other notable citizens were Mr. Benjamin Butterfly, gentleman of leisure; General Galusha Grab, the proprietor of the Blazing Brand Hotel, and Big Boots, the most irrepressible bummer and 'N. G.' character in the new city—an extraordinary liar, braggart and noisy individual, who had a knack of being here, there and everywhere, when anything was going on, and who seemed to believe that the town couldn't well get along without him. Work, he declared, was too menial for him; he was set down upon this earth for a fixed purpose, which would gradually unfold.

Big Boots was regarded as being a harmless mortal, and therefore no one particularly bothered themselves to quarrel with him; consequently he had more "rope," and could commit more diodes than any other man in the camp, without being called to account for it.

As for Mr. Benjamin Butterfly, he was something of an enigma. He had come to the new locate with the crowd, and had remained, although he appeared to have no particular motive in doing so.

He did not do a stroke of work, nor invest in any business; he did not make a multitude of acquaintances, as far as familiarity was concerned, although he spoke when spoken to.

He had the best room at the Blazing Brand, ate

of the best the market afforded, and smoked only first-class cigars.

Liquor he did not touch—at least, in public.

His philanthropy became gradually a matter of comment.

If a pilgrim landed in the town, dead-broke, and wanted a meal, a drink, or tools to go to work with, he was generally sent to Mr. Benjamin Butterfly, and invariably got the "lift" to start him in the world again, on an humble scale though it might be.

Therefore, while he practically sought no popularity, Butterfly Ben, as he was known, gradually made friends, who could be counted on as stand-bys should he ever need their assistance.

And as Butterfly Ben appeared to have no occupation he was voted a gentleman of leisure, and it was natural to suppose that he was well "heeled."

General Galusha Grab was only an important citizen of the town, from the fact that he was genial, rotund, a jolly host, and one, too, who knew how to run a hotel, and who was just as fond of a red-hot bar-room fracas or a street jamboree as the next one.

The day on which we introduce the reader into Grogville City and its heterogeneous society, was the thirty-first day since French Ferd had planted his foot in the golden poc et and avowed his purpose of sprouting a camp on his own hook, and this day had been generally voted as an appropriate one for selecting some capable person to govern the affairs of the place.

Owing to the constant increase of enterprise and population, it was deemed advisable to have a "mayor."

The necessity had been discussed for a number of days, and it was agreed that "something or other" did "about the matter on this 31st day of September—a balmy, beautiful day, radiant with mellow sunlight, a blue sky and gentle breezes, which brought down from the mountains the bracing aroma of the pines.

As yet, but two men had been considered as being just O. K. for the mayoralty, and these were French Ferd and Benjamin Butterfly.

No canvass in particular had been made by the citizens, and the preferred men had remained mute as to whether they would accept nomination for office or not.

It was an open fact that French Ferd and Butterfly Ben did not regard each other with any too much favor, although just why, was a question.

They had never quarreled—indeed, they had never been seen to speak since the first night that Butterfly made his appearance in Satan's Snap.

This fact no doubt generated the belief in the minds of the people that the two men were enemies.

Toward noon of the day of which we write, Benjamin Butterfly was seated in the combined office and saloon of the Blazing Brand Hotel, at an open window, gazing thoughtfully out upon the busy main street, where such a motley throng moved to and fro.

Mr. Butterfly was leisurely smoking one of his fine-flavored cigars, which he appeared to thoroughly enjoy.

At the bar French Ferd was treating a crowd of his admirers, and this was something new, too, for him to patronize the rival hotel; but then, it was to be supposed that he desired to make himself as popular as possible.

Mr. Butterfly paid no attention to the party at the bar, so absorbed was he in thought, nor did he notice a body of men, some fifty odd, in number, enter the hotel, and draw near where he was seated, with hats doffed.

They were mostly roughly-dressed miners, dirty and heavy-bearded, with the "wear" of storm and sun upon their faces, and the callouses of hard toil upon their hands.

They were headed by no less a personage than the redoubtable Big Boots, heretofore mentioned, who, albeit he was rough, uncouth, and bibulous, everybody was willing to admit was nobody's fool.

He was quick-tongued, had, some time in his life, been in good society, and had an exhaustless amount of "chin." He had been accredited with making some sharp and sensible speeches, too, when he did not allow waggery to get ahead of good sense.

And, this Big Boots!

He was a man of medium height, rather broad-shouldered, seemingly large of trunk and limb—the amount of clothing he wore making his real proportions a matter of guess.

At least five suits of clothing was he burdened with, and if the outside suit was any criterion of what he wore underneath, he was literally a walking rag-bag.

When questioned as to why he burdened himself with so much raiment, he had answered: "I allers collars onter a suit, yer see, and lays it by fer a cold day, fer ther sartainties o' life, nowadays, aise so unsartain, thet a galoot don't know one minnit whether he'll hev a shirt ter his back or not ther next, ef he don't keep his eye peeled fer emergencies."

Aside from his clothing, Big Boots wore a shirt that had at some previous period been "b'iled," a battered stove-pipe hat, and a pair of heavy long-legged boots, the size of which must have been No. 14's, at least.

In face and feature he was not particularly noticeable, except that the most of his face was covered with a thick yellowish beard, with like-colored hair upon his head. His nose was red, and his eyes bright, and waggish in their expression.

His hands were small, shapely, and did not look as if they had ever done much work—a thing that he especially prided himself upon.

And such was Big Boots, the "odd 'un," who headed the delegation of miners and citizens who had entered the Blazing Brand Hotel to wait upon Benjamin Butterfly.

That Benjamin was not aware of their presence, was quite evident by the way he started at being touched upon the shoulder by Big Boots.

A look of surprise, if not concern, swept over his face, as he looked around and beheld the delegation.

"Beg parding, most respected sir!" Big Boots said, with a sweeping courtesy, "beg parding, sir. But et becomes me noble self ter arouse ye from a state o' lethargy ter ther realization o' ther sublime fact, that we, representative citizens o' ther city o' Grogville, hev gathered *en masse* before ye."

"I so perceive!" Butterfly assented, with rather a stiff inclination of his head. "May I ask why I am thus honored?"

"You may, you bet yer boots! an' et does me exceeding proud ter rise an' tell ye. These heer citizens represent ther bizness an' laborin' interests o' the camp, an' as yer may hev heard, et hev bin decided ter elect a mayor ter govern ther destinies o' this 'ere hyer camp. Some o' ther citizens agrees that French Ferd is ther man fer ther persition, an' then, ag'in, some don't. So yer see there's two parties, an' no mayor can't be 'p'inted. He must be elected, you bet!"

"Therefore, most honorable sir, this committee o' citizens, whom I represent in ther capacity o' orator, and many of whom are under grateful obligations to you, hev waited on ye ter ask ye ter become ther nom nee fer mayor, believin' as they do that ye would fill ther bill, O. K.-rum. We want a man fer mayor who kin run the town wi'out spillin' any more blood than possible, an' who will guard ther interests o' the citizens against thievery an' blackleg rule. We want er man who kin take his whiskey straight, wi'out payin' fer et out o' ther people's pocket, an' we want er man who spits ter-baccar-juice wi'out slobberin' all over his chin. That's ther sort o' a double-breasted duckling we want fer mayor o' Grogville, an' after sizin' up yer 'iggerhead, we hev come ter the conclusion you aire *just* the hairpin we want, an' hev come to tender ye ther nomination! Eh! boys—ain't that ther cheese?"

The delegation signified their assent by the waving of hats and giving vent to a vigorous "ay!"

"You bet that's ther ticket!" continued Big Boots, "an' every man what ain't a fool will say so. An' now, Mr. Butterfly Benjamin, what's yer think erbout ther matter?"

Butterfly arose with a stately mien, and that certain stolidity of countenance, which was one of his personal characteristics.

"I feel highly honored, gentlemen," he said, "at being offered the nomination for office, because I see that the offer is made voluntarily and in a friendly spirit, without consideration of the qualifications or fitness of your choice; yet, at the same time, I regret that you have not selected some one more worthy from your midst. I am simply a sojourner in your camp, and must respectfully advise you that I can not accept the honor you would thrust upon me, at the same time thanking you sincerely for your offer."

"What! Great horned ace o' Honduras! Ye won't 'cept the nomynation, yer mean ter say?"

"No, gentleman, I cannot. While it would be a pleasure to me to serve you in an official capacity, there are reasons why I could not accept of a local office, a prominent reason being, as I suggested before, that I am only a temporary sojourner in your camp, and not a permanent citizen. I may be called to ther other parts of the country at any minute."

"Hang et, what o' that? Ye kin become our mayor, anyhow, an' git ther masheen workin'. Then, ef yer hev to pull stakes, we kin hunt up another feller. Ain't that so, boys?"

"You bet!" declared the committee, in a chorus.

"We won't take 'no' fer an answer, or any other such flimsy excuse as that. His butterfly nibs has got ter serve!"

"Hurrah! that's ther talk!" yelled Big Boots. "Fer mayor, ther Honorable Benjamin Butterfly. Hip! hip! hooray!"

A ringing shout went up.

"For mayor, the Right Honorable Ferdinand French—hip! hip! hooray!" yelled some one over at the bar, and a rival yell rung forth.

Thus it seemed evident that two parties were formed, and that an election would be necessary.

Benjamin Butterfly, who had become seated, again arose, however, and made himself heard.

"Gentlemen!" he cried, in ringing tones, "I must again refuse to accept of the nomination, and that most emphatically. I would not care to govern this camp, had I a right to—and that I have not, nor has any other man you or the opposition party might select. For you are all usurping the rights of the man who originally discovered the camp, and who will yet visit trouble upon you. You saw him one month ago at Satan's Snap, and he cleaned you out and fled. That man, gentlemen, owns this pocket, by right of having staked it out as a mining claim. I would not, under any consideration, infringe upon his rights by becoming identified with your camp officially."

"A month has passed, it is true, and your operations in this pocket have not been interfered with, but that signifies really nothing. I just as much believe that there is trouble in store for you as I believe I stand before you now!"

French Ferd stepped quickly forward, a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

"On what do you base your belief?" he demanded. "It must be that you are in communication with the individual who claims to own this pocket!"

"Nothing of the sort!" Butterfly replied, with

freezing coolness. "I never saw the man but a couple of times in my life, and never spoke to him at all. All that I know about him is that he fears no man, and strikes back, invariably, when struck at, and I would rather have his friendship than his enmity, albeit I am no coward. His name is one, I fancy, that is not unknown to some of the residents of this camp, and the mention of it, no doubt, would arouse a general feeling of uneasiness here!"

"What is his name?" French Ferd demanded with a sneer—"that is, if it will not be asking too much of you to tell, Mr. Butterfly!"

"His name is Deadwood Dick!" Butterfly cried—"a name known from Dakota to New Mexico."

A murmur of surprise passed through the crowd that had drawn around.

It was evident enough that more than one of the men of Grogville had heard the name.

"Ay! and Deadwood Dick has pronounced the doom of this camp!"

Clear and distinct, the words rung through the room!

CHAPTER VI. THE CHAINED HAND.

In the mean time what has become of Deadwood Dick?

Let us look back just one month, and briefly summarize the events that transpired after Dick's capture of the men, Dennis Doyle, and Jakie, his Dutch partner.

When the men awoke to find themselves prisoners, they vented their wrath in such blasphemous terms that Dick was satisfied they were spies, set upon his movements.

All questioning and threats, however, failed to make them disavow their claim of being Mrs. Seybert's servants.

This by no means convinced Dick or Calamity that their suspicions were not correct, and Dennis and Jakie were accordingly kept close prisoners.

When morning dawned, Dick and Calamity left the cavern, through a secret fissure, and debouched upon a mountain ledge, close to the cascade, from where they could overlook Lovely Layout pocket, without being readily seen.

They saw, then, that French Ferd and his handful of men had possession of the pocket, and were making undoubted preparations to stay.

In answer to Calamity's interrogation to what he proposed to do, Dick remained literally mute, and for three long days paced to and fro in the cavern, moody and uncommunicative, breaking off only occasionally to go out upon the ledge, and watch matters in the pocket below.

Day by day the evidences grew greater that a town was in process of incubation; more miners arrived, bringing their personal effects with them, and by the third day the stampede-invasion was fully under way.

During this time, Calamity Jane had done all in her power to keep Dick's rebellious spirit in check, and to temper him down to the fact that it was next to useless to "kick" against the inevitable.

But although he listened, it was in silence.

His was a spirit that even womanly affection could not "down," when he thought he was in the right; and he surely did believe he was right in claiming Lovely Layout's wealth, by right of discovery.

Yet he loved Calamity, and by no act or word repulsed the tender affection she bestowed upon him. She knew him well—two such spirits as theirs, it may be said, were seldom united—and stood ready to stand by him, whose life had been so strangely beset by wrongs and triumphs.

The third day, toward evening, Dick had saddled his horse, and prepared for a journey of some days' duration.

"You stay here, until my return," he said, "for you hardly can find a safer place."

She did not question his purpose, but, knowing his rallying powers, presumed that he would come back with a dozen or more men as company.

But she was mistaken.

After an absence of ten days, he returned, alone.

He looked excessively fatigued, but would not admit that he was so.

With him, on his return, he brought several pieces of wood, which, when put in shape, formed a common unleaved card-table.

This he placed near the fire, and while Calamity prepared him a tempting repast of wild game, he took a half-hour's observation of Lovely Layout, where building was in rapid progress.

When he returned to the cavern, he seemed in better spirits, and partook of the supper with a relish.

After the meal was done, he walked over to where Dancing Dennis and Limburger Jakie were chafing in confinement.

"I've been stirring up your history, my fine fellows," he said, grimly, "and the result is just about as I expected. A fine pair of pills you are, ain't you?"

Dennis remained silent; a drawing of his long jaws showing that he was inclined to be aggressive.

"Ve vas no pills!" Jakie ventured to remark. "Vot you hear we don't care. Der neffer vos so innocent beoples vot we be."

"Oh! I presume not. Innocence, nowadays, is not what it is cracked up to be. However, I've found out who and what you are. You engaged at Camp Clark, to guide one Mrs. Seybert and party, to Maricopas, on the Southern Pacific Railroad, but, instead, as far as I can learn—and taking your previous reputation into consideration—you guided the aforesaid Mrs. Seybert into the hands of an outlaw gang. By diligent inquiry, I have learned that the only outlaws in this immediate part, are command-

ed by one Mormon Bill, and it follows that Mormon Bill has Mrs. Seybert and party in his custody.

"As for this Mrs. Seybert, she is not what she is reputed to be, if one may judge by the fact, that when she and her party left Camp Clark, they forgot to pay their bills."

"Faith, an' it's a divil a bit I know whether she paid her bills or not, an' less I care!" Dennis declared. "Shure we've got nary a cent from her, these two weeks. As fer tha charge yez make against us, yer honor, there's nary a bit o' truth in it at all, at all."

"Oh! well, of course you would say so. I am so well satisfied that you are a pair of toughs, that I shall hold you as prisoners, indefinitely."

And with this assurance, Dick turned away, leaving the two to such unpleasant reflections as his words might have aroused.

Before returning to the fire, where Calamity was seated, he went first to one side of the cavern, and thrust his hand into a niche in the wall, and from thence drew forth a package, wrapped in brown paper, and brought it forward to the table, where he deposited it.

Seating himself at the table, he carefully unwrapped the paper, and there appeared to his view and that of Calamity, the hand of which he had made mention, on the night of their flight from Satan's Snap!

The hand and wrist were now as white as marble, and as perfect as though the member had just been cut from a human being.

It was evidently, a lady's hand, and the close-linked silver chain around the wrist had become imbedded in what was once soft flesh, but now was apparently stone.

Even a plain gold ring was attached to the forefinger, and attached to the end of the chain not wrapped about the wrist, was a handsome stiletto, with silver mountings.

The fingers of the hand were all straightened out, close together, and were small and shapely, and seemed to prove that the hand had never done much work.

Dick laid this singular trophy upon the table, and looked inquiringly at Calamity, as much as to say:

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"Mercy, it is the petrified hand you started to tell me about, when we met the Irishman and Dutchman?"

"The same. It is the hand that directed me to the discovery of Lovely Layout. Without doubt, it once belonged to a woman, but at present, as you see, it is petrified, and powerless. Despite this fact, it wrote me the secret of Lovely Layout's location, and directed me to seek and claim the gold in the pocket. I followed the directions—I came, I saw, but have not yet conquered. But conquer I will before I turn away from this vicinity, as sure as fate. See this!"

He spread out before her, on the table, a rudely sketched map of the mountains in that vicinity, beginning at a point miles to the southeastward, and delineating the trails, gulches, pockets and water-courses, in a manner that, though rough, was very comprehensive and precise.

Lovely Layout pocket was characterized by a star, and the two routes leading to it from the big gulch, were traced in heavy lines.

At the bottom of the map, in a bold feminine style of chirography, was written the following:

"Seek the star, and find a fortune waiting. Fight for it, if needs be, but also stand ready to fight for the one who gave it to you, when she appeals to you! If you are in trouble, and need counsel, place a piece of paper under my hand, and seek your rest. The morrow shall bring you forth an answer, by following which, success will prosper you. But, you must believe in the power of mine hand, and obey its instructions. You will always find it reliable."

"THE LONE HAND."

Calamity looked over the map, and its message, her face expressing the surprise she felt.

"How did you come by this map?" she asked.

"As strangely as I came by the hand, itself," Dick replied. "Several nights after finding the hand, I put up at a hotel in a mining-camp, as I once before started to tell you. Before retiring I made an examination of the hand, out of increased curiosity to get at its history, and finally went to bed, leaving the hand, chain and stiletto, lying on the table, something as you see them now. There was not a scrap of paper on the table, nor were there, so far as I know, any writing materials in the room, at the time when I retired; but, in the morning when I arose, this map lay upon the table, and was partly held down by the hand. How it came there I have no means of knowing, but it came most mysteriously, at any rate, for the door of my room was bolted on the inside, and the window was also fastened. You cannot wonder, therefore, that I was strangely impressed by the message, and hunted out the pocket, where usurpers are now building a town."

"This message directs me to apply for advice, when in trouble, and I am going to put the matter to test. You know I have never believed in things supernatural, but something unexplainable urges me to abide by the directions of this Lone Hand, and I am going to do so."

Calamity, laughed, dryly.

"And so you expect, by desiring advice that this hand of stone will have given it to you, by morning?" she asked.

"Foolish though such a notion may seem, I do!" Dick assured. "I am going to give the matter a test, and if it amounts to nothing, I shall not be seriously disappointed. I am inclined to make a fight for Lovely Layout, but something seems to warn me

not to. And so, to put the matter to a test, I will go by the directions of this mysterious Lone Hand. If it says 'Go ahead, and have your rights,' I shall do so. If to the contrary, I shall abide by the decision."

And so saying, Dick spread a sheet of blank paper upon the table, and placed the tips of those cold, petrified fingers upon it.

"The morning will tell!" he said, "and I shall know my future course of duty."

Later, they laid down to rest, while the Lone Hand kept its vigil upon the table near the pine-cone fire, which but dimly illuminated the further parts of the cavern.

When morning drew on apace, Calamity was first to awaken, and ignite a pitch knot, thereby furnishing sufficient illumination for her to note that Deadwood Dick was still sleeping soundly.

She had not slept well, herself, her rest being disturbed by innate curiosity to know whether or no Dick would get his answer from the Lone Hand.

With torch in hand, therefore, after satisfying herself that Dick still reposed, she moved toward the table.

When Calamity reached the table, she saw the hand still there, and the cold, white fingers held down the edge of the paper Deadwood Dick had placed beneath them some hours before.

But the paper was not blank, now; it contained a pencil-written message, the reading of which caused Calamity to utter an ejaculation of astonishment:

The message was as follows:—

"DEADWOOD DICK, PRINCE OF THE ROAD:—

"Your duty is plain enough before you. You are daily being robbed of the precious golden dust which I willed should be yours, and it is for you to begin a warfare against those who are infringing on your rights. Pronounce the doom of Grogville, and fight to the bitter end, so that you regain what is yours. And believe that in hours of peril your path will be pointed out by the

"LONE HAND."

CHAPTER VII.

"ROBBERY! ROBBERY!"

THE words that rung through the bar-room of the Blazing Brand Hotel, announcing that Deadwood Dick had pronounced the doom of the town, caused great excitement, coming as they did immediately after Benjamin Butterfly had announced his opinion that the aforesaid Richard had vengeance in store for those who were usurping his rights.

Every one looked sharply about, but as the words had appeared to come from a part of the room where there was no person standing at that moment the crowd stared at each other in mystification and inquiry.

French Ferd was the first one to speak.

"Who uttered them words?" he demanded, fiercely. "Show me the man, and I'll take the personal responsibility of blowing his cussed brains out!"

And the king of Grogville glared about him viciously enough to indicate that he meant what he said.

"Hal hal hal!"

A ringing, sarcastic laugh was heard—the laugh of Deadwood Dick, and it sounded as if coming directly from the lips of Mike, the burly bartender of the Blazing Brand, who was engaged in mixing a cocktail. French Ferd uttered an oath, and strode fiercely toward the bar.

"What do you mean, you Irish p'izen-mixer?" he roared. "What d'ye mean by laughin' at my remarks, cuss you?"

"Who's been laughin'?" growled Mike; "not me, I'll swear."

"You did laugh! The 'Hal hal hal' came right from your lips, an' I know it!"

"You're a liar, by the clock!" declared Mike, and over the top of the bar came in view, the muzzle of a "six," backing the assertion.

French Ferd uttered a curse, and turned away.

"I reckon it was Deadwood Dick himself who laughed," observed Butterfly Ben, "as the voice sounded a great deal like that of the man who fought the crowd over at Satan's Snap. Such being the case, Deadwood Dick may now be in our midst, and in disguise."

"I'll give five hundred dollars to the man who will point the devil out to me or secure his capture, dead or alive!" French Ferd declared, in a voice loud enough to be heard in any part of the room. "Five hundred for the capture of Deadwood Dick, dead or alive!"

"An' by ther bleached bones of behemoths, I'm ther sawed off son-of-a-sea-cook as is goin' ter scoop ther boddle!" declared Purty Pete, the hideous dwarf, who constituted one of the crowd. "Ef ther' is sech a feller as Deadwood Dick, or whoever else may threaten ther glorious town o' Grogville, he's my meat an' munchin', from ther word go. An' I perpose, sence French Ferd aire ther only candidate fer mayor, we put him inter power at once, so he kin conduct matters 'cording ter law, an' hang every rebel as sez Grogville ain't ours, be-gum!"

The proposal was received with general acclamation, and voting began, later in the day, at the Casino Hotel.

It was principally a one-sided election, as there being but one candidate, those who did not conclude to vote for French Ferd, did not vote at all, and were in the minority, anyhow.

By sunset all the votes were cast, and Ferdinand French was pronounced "mayor" and in other respects, ruler of Grogville City.

The mayor elect showed his appreciation of the honor conferred upon him by declaring "iree bar" at the Casino, for all those who had voted for him.

And, as might be guessed, the men would not

miss an opportunity to get "b'ilin' full," when an opportunity was afforded them, free of cost, so there were many howling drunk and ready for any row.

During the evening a notice was posted up in the Casino as follows:

"PROCLAMATION!"

"It having come to the notice of the undersigned, newly-elected Mayor of the city of Grogville, Territory of Arizona, that a noted thief, desperado and blackleg in general, known as Deadwood Dick, has illegally made claim to the gold-producing lands of Grogville Pocket; and furthermore, that he has made vengeful threats against said town and its inhabitants—

"Therefore, do I hereby offer a reward of five hundred dollars for the capture of said outlaw, Deadwood Dick, and an additional reward of one hundred dollars each, for the capture of such persons as may be proven to be under his command, or in collusion with him. FERDINAND FRENCH, Mayor of Grogville."

This notice was conspicuously posted and attracted no little attention from those assembled at the Casino, to drink of the new mayor's stock of Taos whisky.

Over at the Blazing Brand hotel a handful of men were gathered, who did not feel warranted in partaking of French Ferd's hospitality, as they did not approve of him as a proper person to run the camp.

Among the lot was Mr. Benjamin Butterfly. Not so with the irrepressible bullwhacker, Big Boots.

No sooner had French Ferd announced "free bar," than Mr. Big Boots was on hand, loquacious and thirsty, and was among the first to moisten his throat at the new mayor's expense.

And it was a noticeable fact that when Big Boots got his place at the bar, he was careful not to vacate it, in order to give any one else a chance.

He tasted lightly of the amber liquor, however, and in half a dozen rounds had not taken more than a regulation Western man's swig.

French Ferd's attention was called to the bullwhacker's presence by Purty Pete, the dwarf.

"Yer see him?" the dwarf said. "He's helpin' hisself as ef he were welcome. Et was he who tried ter git Butterfly ter run fer mayor, yer know?"

"So it was. Go order him to get out of my place, an' ef he don't travel lively throw him out!" French Ferd growled.

Purty Pete grinned and walked over toward the bar, and when he came up behind Big Boots, he slapped him heavily on the shoulder.

"Come! you git up an' git outen here!" the dwarf ordered, authoritatively. "Who told you ter put yer muzzle inter this hyer set-out?"

"Who?" quoth Big Boots, wheeling sharply around. "Why, gol darn yer skin, who d'ye suppose, but me royal self? That's who, Mister Stubb, an' nary another a galoot lent an assenting voice. An' now, me Christyun friend, what hev you got ter say erbout et?"

"I'll mighty quick show ye, ef you don't git up and dust yerself!" the dwarf blustered. "The captin' allows yer didn't vote fer him, an' he give me orders ter put yer out o' his hotel."

"The captin' did?"

"Yas—ther boss—ther mayor."

"He ordered yeou ter put me out—yeou, a leetle sawed-off snappin'-turtle like yeou? Waal! waal! I'll be kicked ter death by anty-mires, ef thet don't strike me as durn'd funny!"

And Big Boots glared incredulously at Purty Pete, as if he were inclined to the belief that the dwarf was joking.

"You'll find out how funny et is!" was the fierce answer, "ef you don't git out, without any moce mouth. The boss sed ef you wouldn't go out fer tellin', ter throw ye out, an' that's precisely what I'm goin' ter do!"

"Bully fer you! Ther murmur of yer bazzoo pierces ther pan o' my tympanum, like a gentle zephyr blowin' off a cow's back—et do, by butter-milk? And, ter see yer wade right in clean up ter yer fins, an' mazourky me out o' this shebang, single handed, is one of the s'ghts I ache ter see. So pitch in, Stubbins, and show us how ye make out!"

There was a murmur of approval from the crowd, as Purty Pete pulled off his jacket, for he was a man of prodigious strength, and the majority believed he could handle Big Boots without any trouble. Then, too, the latter had not been known to engage in any more serious wrangle than "fighting with his mouth," for which he had quite a local reputation.

To see Purty Pete put Big Boots out would be fine sport, undoubtedly, but Big Boots was not going to be made a subject of amusement for the crowd, just because the bystanders would appreciate such a thing.

A peculiar smile swept over the bullwhacker's bearded face, as he saw Purty Pete jerk off his coat, and he appeared to have no fear of the consequences of a tussle.

When Pete had completed his preparations, by rolling up the sleeves on his knotty arms, he glared at Big Boots ferociously.

"Come! now—aire ye goin' ter git out o' here?" he roared, "or shall I throw ye out, an' mop the street with ye?"

"Throw me out, an' mop the street wi' me, to be sure!" was the response. "Just toss me cl'ar over the moon, fer fun!"

With a snarl, Purty Pete leaped forward, as if bent on the annihilation of this opponent, but, he did not succeed in clinching with his enemy, for a well-aimed blow from Big Boots's fist, knocked him

clean off his feet, and he came down upon the floor with a thud.

"Hooray! Furst blood fer Big Boots!" the bullwhacker yelled, as a stream of claret spurted from Purty Pete's nose. "Up wi' ye—come ter time, ye sawed-off snake, an' I'll make yer think that Barnaby Big Boots is a double-headed cyclone o' pile-drivers on a thirty-day rampage. Waltz me out o' this shebang, wull ye, ye durned adder? Why, I'll do ye up an' throw ye cl'ar over ther range!"

And, grabbing the dwarf up as though he were a month old babe, he raised him above his head, and dashed him bodily through the bar-room window, into the street!

Almost at the same instant that he did so, a man came running into the hotel, as if pursued by Satan and all his hosts.

"Robbery! robbery!" he yelled. "The bank has been entered, sence closin' time, an' robbed of every red cent, an' every ounce o' gold. An', posted on the door is a card givin' the compliments of Deadwood Dick!"

The man who made this startling announcement, was the clerk employed by French Ferd, to conduct the affairs of the bank, his name being Goff—Giles Goff.

Could it be true?

Had Deadwood Dick already begun his campaign against the town, whose doom his voice had so recently pronounced?

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK MAKES SOME DISCOVERIES.

As may be imagined, the excitement caused by Goff's announcement was intense—so great, indeed, that the quarrel between Purty Pete and Big Boots was entirely forgotten—Purty Pete, himself, bruised and bleeding, joining in the crowd that rushed from the hotel toward the strong cabin a couple of hundred yards distant, where the bank or mining exchange was located.

Not only would French Ferd be a large sufferer, if the bank had been robbed, but nearly every person in the town would be losers, except, maybe, a few recent arrivals; for the institution had accepted deposits for safe keeping, and had done a general banking business.

French Ferd was naturally one of those to reach the bank first, and he and Goff entered alone, locking the door behind them.

When they came out, the former made the announcement that the bank had indeed been entered, since supper-time, and systematically relieved of all the gold-dust and currency in its safe, the lock of which had been cleverly picked.

The only clew to the robber was a card which Goff had found pinned to the door, on the inside. This card French Ferd produced, and showed to the excited crowd.

It was a white piece of paper, of considerable size, on which was traced in ink:

"COMPLIMENTS OF DEADWOOD DICK."

Of course the crowd fairly howled at this, and a demand was made by some of the miners to see the inside of the bank and the books.

This demand was finally granted by French Ferd, although he first tried to persuade the crowd to wait until morning; but they cried the idea down, and were finally admitted.

An examination proved, surely enough, that the bank contained no money, and the books showed that, at the close of that day's business, the bank had fifteen thousand dollars in money, and twelve thousand in uncoined gold.

About half of this belonged individually to French, and the balance to depositors, whose losses would range from five dollars upward.

Entrance to the cabin had been gained through a rear locked door, the front door always being heavily barred on the inside, after banking hours.

The excitement grew none the less, as the realization grew older on the miners, that their savings had been appropriated thus feloniously by one who threatened doom to the town.

And few eyes closed in sleep all that night, for the street was thronged with an excited populace, who denounced Deadwood Dick in terms too strong to bear repetition here.

And it is needless to add that Deadwood Dick would have been lynched summarily, had he been caught, there and then.

Shortly after daybreak, the following morning, Grogville's citizens were given another start, by finding posted up in full view, on the outer wall of the bank, a placard, containing the following, in bold chirography:

"NOTICE!"

"TO THE PEOPLE OF GROGVILLE!"

"Having learned that the charge of robbing your local bank has been laid to me, I wish to emphatically deny any connection with such a crime. When I have all prepared for my warfare, I shall not rob your banks or dwellings, but shall boldly obtain my rights, at the muzzle of the pistol. For the robber of your bank, you had best look in your own midst. The card was a forgery!"

"DEADWOOD DICK."

Of course this bulletin, supposedly coming from Deadwood Dick, created another bubble of excitement, and set the caldron of local indignation and doubt boiling over again.

The denial was variously regarded.

Nearly every person in the camp read the notice before French Ferd ordered it to be torn down.

It is safe to say the majority poohed at the denial, and believed it had been made to throw the respon-

sibility of the job off the real offender's shoulders, and possibly with a view of kicking up trouble among the citizens, so as to divide them into two parties.

Others did not share in these beliefs so fully, while a few quietly hinted to each other that there was no positive certainty but what French Ferd had conspired with Goff to remove the wealth, and had laid the suspicion on Deadwood Dick, as being the most natural way to avoid suspicion.

Several days passed; searching parties scoured the neighboring mountains, and the border of the pocket was kept under the surveillance of spies; even every new-comer to the camp was forced to undergo an examination, to prove that he or she was not Deadwood Dick in disguise.

And yet, unbeknown to any of the residents of the camp, the redoubtable Dick was right in their midst, and had been so nearly ever since the camp began to take the shape of a settlement.

Not one was there, perhaps, who could have been made to believe, without actual proof, that the illiterate and irrepressible bummer, Big Boots, and Deadwood Dick, were one and the same persons.

Yet such was a fact!

Always handy at a disguise, Dick found no trouble in making up and working the rough and typical character he sustained, and thus it was he was able to be right about among the scenes where he was mapping out plans for a campaign of victory.

The cabin he occupied he had bought, and thus was a resident in reality.

It was only in the dead of night, when others slept, that Dick ventured to visit Calamity in the camp, where she was a faithful guard over the two prisoners, Dennis and Jackie.

Although the two chafed, and were growing thin under their confinement, they refused to state where Mrs. Seybert and her party could be found, and as Dick was determined to conquer them, day after day rolled by with the situation unchanged.

While, in his disguise of Big Boots, Dick was trying to work out a mystery—the mystery of the Lone Hand!

We have already chronicled two of the singular messages Dick had mysteriously received, and with which the petrified hand would appear to have had some connection. Since the last one he had received at the cavern, he had brought the hand to his cabin, in Grogville, which he always kept locked.

Sometimes of nights he would place a paper beneath the stone fingers, before retiring, with a question written thereon, and would also leave his door unlocked.

Only on one of these occasions did he get an answer, and that was one night when he was away, and had left on his table the following questions:

"Can you tell me, is Mrs. Seybert a prisoner in the power of Mormon Bill; and where Mormon Bill's stronghold is located?"

On Dick's return, an answer was appended to the paper. It was:

"To first question, I believe so. Pursued by the terror of vengeance, they fell into the hands of one not less their enemy than I. To second question, I do not know—cannot find out—but trust that you will find out, for the LONE HAND."

As may be supposed, Dick's curiosity did not decrease on receipt of this.

He wrote several messages afterward, but got no answer.

Several times, of an evening, however, he had heard a light footstep outside his door, and would make a hasty attempt to find who was outside, but never succeeded in discovering any one, spy though he was, although morning examination would discover female footprints in the vicinity.

On one occasion only, had he seen a face pressed to his window-pane—one wild stormy night, when he chanced to look quickly toward the window. There he saw, close to the glass, a female face—that of a young and pretty woman, with perfect features, but wild, peering eyes—eyes belonging to a maniac, it occurred to Dick—and black hair that formed a sort of disheveled wreath around the face and head.

The face disappeared in an instant, and, as in other instances, Dick failed to find any traces of any one outside, when he left the cabin.

This was not the only mystery that Dick was trying to study out, while at the same time he was gradually maturing plans for getting his rights in the possession of the placer.

He regarded Mr. Benjamin Butterfly as a mystery of the first water, and one that was not destined to be easily solved.

That Butterfly was not the man's name, Dick felt satisfied.

That the man was more naturally a Western man than a New Yorker, also struck Dick as a point; while still another conviction was, that Butterfly was not taking his ease so quietly and unostentatiously, in a rough town like Grogville, without some prime object in view for future development, for, aside from the fact that it cost the snug little sum of five dollars per diem, to stop at the Blazing Brand Hotel, in the style and comfort Butterfly enjoyed, he did not always appear in a pleasant mood.

Some days his face would wear a very downcast and gloomy expression, as if he were oppressed by some weighing sorrow or trouble; at other times he was the picture of quiet good-nature and complacency.

As Big Boots, Dick had plenty of chance to study the man, and the more he studied the more puzzled he grew.

If Benjamin Butterfly had an occupation, it was

invisible to ordinary observers, and carried on in the seclusion of his room, which he seldom occupied, except at bedtime hours.

He never gambled; he never left the immediate neighborhood of the Blazing Brand Hotel, so far as Deadwood Dick could find out.

A couple of days after the robbery, which Dick had had no hand in, he was lounging about the main street of the camp, listening to whatever occasional conversation he could hear, much of which was in uncomplimentary allusion to himself, when he glanced over toward the Blazing Brand Hotel, and saw Benjamin Butterfly sitting at the second-story window of his room, the sash of which was raised.

In order not to be observed, while observing, himself, Big Boots stepped into the nearest store where he could look at Butterfly through a window.

For some five minutes or more Big Boots watched his man, but made no further discovery than that there was a look of expectancy upon Butterfly's face, as if he was expecting some one, or something.

Another five minutes, and Big Boots's vigil was rewarded by a discovery that caused him to give vent to a whistle of surprise.

A snow-white pigeon came sailing down the street, and after circumscribing several circles in front of the hotel, alighted on Butterfly's window-sill.

Butterfly quickly seized the bird and disappeared within his room.

"A carrier-pigeon, by jingo!" Big Boots muttered. "Here's a go. What is Mr. Benjamin Butterfly doing with carrier-pigeons, I wonder? I'll be blamed if I wouldn't give an honest penny to know. As I suspected, all his seeming quietude and idleness is but the mask for some other matter he is concerned in. Can it be that one of the suspicions I have really had is true? If so, I am most likely red-hot onto a trail."

Within an hour's time, during which Big Boots watched the front of the Blazing Brand Hotel narrowly, the pigeon reappeared from Butterfly's window and soared away out of sight.

The next day these actions of the bird were repeated.

It arrived at Butterfly's window at about the same hour, and took its departure about the same time as on the day when Big Boots had discovered it.

And so with the next, and the next, and the next.

By this time, the excitement had somewhat abated, as regarded the bank robbery, the people having settled down to the apparent fact that the money was gone, and there was little or no use of "crying over spilt milk."

It was generally conceded that Deadwood Dick was the robber, and every one was on the watch, in hopes of capturing him and obtaining the reward, the offer now having been increased to one thousand dollars.

On the afternoon of the fourth day after that on which Big Boots had first seen the carrier-pigeon he chanced to visit the strip of timber on the opposite side of the pocket, from where the main buildings of the camp were located, his object being to procure some ammunition which he had privately cached there.

There was not much of it, consisting of a few packages of cartridges, and when he had stored them away about his person he started to return to the camp.

While on his way his attention was attracted by a fluttering sound in a clump of bushes, as if some bird or fowl were trying to get out.

Examination proved that a pigeon was stuck in the thicket, and to all appearances it was the identical one that visited the Blazing Brand Hotel, for it was snowy white in color, and it had become imprisoned through a string, which was tied to one wing, becoming entangled in the shrubbery of the thicket.

No paper was attached to the string, however, but by searching among the bushes Big Boots, or Deadwood Dick, as we may as well hereafter call him, soon discovered a folded note, which contained the following message:

"FORT FREEZE-OUT, Friday No n.

"MORMON BILL:—The men are getting impatient for orders to be doing something, and the prisoners are daily becoming more of a nuisance. Come to-night by all means, and make some future provisions for the boys' bread-and-butter, or else don't blame me if they mutinize. LIEUTENANT LILY."

"Ha, ha! So I have got at the secret at last, and my suspicions are confirmed!" Dick muttered, exultantly. "The Honorable Benjamin Butterfly is no other than Mormon Bill, the head chief of an outlaw band, in whose power Mrs. Seybert and her party are held captives. So far so good. Now, it appears that Mormon Bill has not been giving his men any jobs to do lately, and they are getting restive, and tired of the prisoners."

"If Mormon Bill gets this message, he will most likely tie himself to the rendezvous, to-night. It strikes me I'd like to know where Fort Freeze-Out is, too."

So Dick released the carrier-pigeon from the thicket, and after re-tying the message to its wing, let it fly, and had the satisfaction of seeing it course directly toward the Blazing Brand Hotel.

"I wonder would it return to me, when released by Mormon Bill?" Dick mused. "It's worth trying, at any rate."

He lingered near the thicket for nearly an hour, when, to his delight, he saw the pigeon coming back and it alighted directly on his shoulder.

Removing the message it carried, he perused the following:

"Send the men away, to attack the Clark stage, to-night. I will visit you, but want the others away. "MORMON BILL."

That was all, but it was enough.

Dick was aware that Mormon Bill was to visit his stronghold, that evening, and that was precisely what he wanted to know.

It was his intention to shadow the outlaw chieftain, and find out where "Fort Freeze-Out" was located.

So he re-fastened the note under the wing of the bird, and gave it its freedom, whereupon it soared away up among the mountains, and was soon lost to view.

Deadwood Dick then returned to camp, feeling that his discoveries, so far, were more than likely to be followed by others, that would unravel the mystery of the Seyberts, and the Lone Hand.

For Dick really had no intention of striking for his own rights until he had solved at least the mystery of the severed hand.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRANGE STORY OF MORMON BILL.

WHEN Deadwood Dick returned to the camp, he saw Benjamin Butterfly, or as we shall henceforth call him, Mormon Bill, seated on the piazza of the Blazing Brand Hotel, engaged as usual, in puffing away at a fragrant cigar, of which he must have had a good stock, as no such cigars as his were to be found at any of the shops in Grogville.

The man's face looked grim and resolute, now, instead of wearing its usual complacent expression.

After idling about for awhile, Dick sought his cabin, and locked himself within it.

Seating himself at the table, provided with pencil and paper, he proceeded deliberately to make a careful drawing of the petrified hand, as it lay white and motionless before him.

Nature had gifted him with the talent of an artist, as well as with so many other remarkable powers that his adventurous career from time to time brought to light, and in half an hour's time, he had upon the table, almost an exact reproduction of the hand, with its chain and stiletto attachments.

This work finished, Dick folded the drawing, placed it in his pocket, and left the cabin, going to the Blazing Brand Hotel.

In passing where Mormon Bill was seated, Dick slipped the drawing so dexterously into the outlaw's side pocket that no notice was taken of the action, either by Bill, or any one else.

Soon after, Dick took his position on the opposite side of the street, on the Casino steps, in order that he might watch his man, while, at the same time, he was ostensibly engaged in the perusal of a paper he had picked up somewhere about the camp.

He presumed Mormon Bill would soon discover the drawing, for it had been placed in the pocket where the outlaw captain carried his handkerchief, an article frequently used by him.

It was to observe the features of Mormon Bill when he found the drawing of the chained hand, that Deadwood Dick had prepared the paper; for, somehow, he believed that Mormon Bill and the hand had some connection, or at least, that Bill knew something of the mystery enveloping the decapitated and now petrified member.

What reason he had for believing this Dick could not have told, but, somehow, an idea that a sight of the hand would give Mormon Bill a start had occurred to him as probable, and he had prepared the test.

It was not long before Bill reached in his pocket for his handkerchief, and in drawing it forth also drew out the paper.

He gazed at it a moment curiously, as if trying to remember when he had put it there, then slowly unfolded it.

As his eyes rested upon the drawing he gave a quick start, and his face turned suddenly white.

Quickly he crumpled the paper in his hand, glared searchingly about him, then arose and strode into the hotel.

"Thought I'd fetch him!" Dick muttered. "Mr. Butterfly, alias Mormon Bill, does know something about the hand, and I'm inclined to believe he will make me his confidant by and by."

Mormon Bill did not make his appearance again until after supper, when he spent the evening on the piazza in smoking.

Shortly after dusk, and the night promised to be very dark, too, he left the hotel and sauntered toward the pass by which entrance was gained to the golden pocket.

Reaching the mouth of this pass, he thrust his pants into his boot-tops and waded down the stream which, all the way to Big Gulch, did not exceed six inches in depth at any point.

The journey to the Big Gulch did not consume over an hour's time, then the outlaw chief walked rapidly up the northern course of the gulch.

Not a pause did he make for upward of two hours; but, before beginning the ascent of a precipitous mountain, he took a few minutes' breathing spell.

Then he toiled up the mountain, following a zig-zag sort of animal trail, which at times ran sharply upward, making climbing difficult.

Another hour was consumed in this sort of traveling, and at last Mormon Bill reached the mountain-top plateau, where was located the grim stone rendezvous.

Lieutenant Lily came forward to meet the chieftain almost as soon as he stepped upon the plateau.

"You are most welcome, captain, after your long absence, and I am glad to see you looking so well," the lieutenant said.

"Yes, I am well!" was the terse response. "Did you send the men away?"

"Yes, captain—every mother's son of 'em has gone. Your order to tap the Camp Clark stage was hailed with delight, for the boys have been chafing under the restraint of camp-life."

"So I presume. I should have come before, only I was not quite ready to make a disposal of the prisoners, nor am I now. However, I will see them."

"You did not hear from the lady's husband, then?"

Mormon Bill laughed dryly.

"She has none that would own her, although she has committed bigamy several times. I merely wrote you that I intended to try to get ransom of her New York dupe, so as to allay her suspicions that she had fallen into the hands of her most deadly enemy. Come! we will see if she recognizes me!"

They then went forward, and entered the "Fort," the door of which was not now guarded, as on our previous visit.

Within, a bright fire burned near the center of the room, and lying in half reclining positions around it, were the few members of Mrs. Seybert's party, including the lady, herself.

They were prisoners, for their feet were bound with cords.

As Lieutenant Lily and Mormon Bill drew near the fire, the prisoners looked up, eagerly.

Then, as their gaze rested upon the face of the outlaw chieftain, all grew white with terror, and Mrs. Seybert uttered a suppressed scream.

"William Winthrop!" she cried, gaspingly, a shudder agitating her frame.

"Exactly—alias Mormon Bill!" was the grim response. "I see you have not forgotten me, and evidently you did not suspect that you had fallen into the power of your bitterest enemy!"

"Good God! no. I believed you dead."

"Maybe so, but I doubt even that, you guilty she-devil. If you had really believed that, I doubt if you would have spent your time and money in dodging from point to point, to escape my vengeance. No! no! For five years, your life and that of your accursed hangings, here, has been one constant dread, that no power or pleasure could deaden. You have fled from point to point, like the guilty wretches you are. For you well knew that Bill Winthrop was not booked to die, until he had avenged the demonish wrong you did."

Mrs. Seybert buried her face in her hands, and trembled violently, as did Miss Granville.

Thomas Seybert regarded the outlaw, however, with a stolid expression of countenance, that bordered upon insolence.

Winthrop went on:

"I knew you were dodging me, and I let you dodge. I kept track of you, believing sooner or later you would run into my power, and, sure enough, you did. I had all my plans well laid, and with my band of rangers, I located in this deserted edifice of some past and gone age, a few weeks before you turned up at Camp Clark, as Mrs. Seybert and party of New York."

"Then, her name is not Mrs. Seybert?" Lieutenant Lily ventured to ask.

"No. That is one of her numberless fictions. Would you like to hear the story?"

"I would indeed, captain, for you know I am one of your most sincere friends."

"So I believe, Lily, so I believe, and you shall hear the story. It is not a pleasant one to tell, nor a fairy tale, but I will tell it."

"Thank you, captain, I shall be most glad to hear it."

Mormon Bill folded his arms, cast a withering look of hatred at the prisoners, and began:

"This woman's maiden name, as far as I can learn, was once Sally Sloan, but she has long since lost identity with it through a dozen bigamous marriages, her original first husband being, to-day alive. Anyhow, you behold in her one of the most successful female hellions the world ever produced. It would be a sacrilege to call her an adventuress. There is not a profession in the criminal calendar but what she has had a hand in—murder, robbery, abduction, sneak thieving, forgery, arson and so forth, while one of her notable practices has been to marry rich men, and skip off with their wealth; and still another of her operations has been blackmailing and the wanton destruction of others' happiness and homes."

"Of late years her son and yonder adventuress, who passes as her niece, have been her accomplices, but the old woman has always been king-pin of the business."

"Six years ago, a bachelor and one of the wealthy men of San Francisco, I retired from business, to settle down for the rest of my life in peace and plenty, as a benedict. I had been much over the world, and was content to rest."

"I had long had my choice picked out—a poor but pretty maiden, named Iris Glenroy—a girl of unquestionable purity, of attractive nature and of fine attainments."

"We were married, moved into our elegant home, and, for a year, lived a life of uninterrupted happiness."

"In our neighborhood this so-called Mrs. Seybert, but then known as Madam Merton, ran one of the most high-toned gaming places in the city, to which only the first men of the city were admissible. She kept a bevy of female gamblers around her, and yonder young woman was one of them."

"Outside her own den the madam was known as a Christian and charitable woman, and found admission to many aristocratic homes."

"She once individually invited me to a poker-party at her house, but, as I knew much of her place, I flatly refused, and gave her to understand a little of her acquaintance was a good deal."

"Of course I never dreamed that the human she

hyena would seek to destroy my home, but she did. She called on my wife, unknown to me. What influence she exerted over her I do not know, but, at the end of the first year of my married life, I was privately informed that Mrs. Winthrop had been seen as one of the devoted players at Madam Merton's faro-table, and that, on two occasions, during my temporary absence, she had been seen driving with Tom Merton, the madam's son."

"You can never half imagine the terrible shock the news gave me. I would not believe it until convinced by my own sight. Lodge nights I never got home until late; it was about the only times I was away from home for more than a couple of hours at a time."

"So one night, in disguise, I accompanied a friend to the madam's. There, sure enough, was Iris, gayly dressed, and an enthusiastic devotee of the game of faro. I saw her at the faro-table—I saw her sit beside Tom Merton on the sofa, and drink wine. It maddened me, and, to avoid a scene, I left the house."

"When my wife came to my door, not long after, I met her, accused her, and cursed her, and bade her never let me see her face again. And she went. What happened for the next week I was ignorant of, until I recovered from a delirious fever. Then I learned that Iris had drawn on my bank account to its full extent, on a forged check, and had disappeared."

"Madam Merton and niece had disappeared also."

"Well, for a time, I think I was on the verge of insanity, but finally recovered. I sold off my real estate, and set out a wanderer on the face of the earth. I took an oath to hunt the destroyer of my home and happiness down to death—a fearful oath that must be kept, or forfeit my hope of mercy in the hereafter."

"A year afterward I heard of a famous female gambler, answering to the Merton woman's description, running things high-handed in New Mexico, and I went there. My prey had been there, but had fled, after a shocking crime."

"The madam and Iris had been running a gaming house there, and in dull hours, had fallen to gaming among themselves."

"One night not long before my arrival, they had had a quarrel, a result of which was that each wagered her entire money on a game of cards. Then the game was played and there was a dispute. Iris claimed the stakes, and reached forward to take them, with her right hand."

"In a frenzy of fury, the madam quickly drew a heavy knife and brought it down across Iris's wrist with a force that actually severed hand and wrist completely from the arm! At the same instant, Tom Merton shot the misguided woman through the breast. Then the money was seized, and the mother, son and niece fled from the den."

"The game was played late at night, and the only other witness to the tragedy, was the half tipsy bartender. He raised the body of Iris, and laid it upon a table, and then rushed forth to get a doctor and raise an alarm. To do this, in the dead of night, required several minutes and by the time the first ones got to the den, the body had been spirited away, but the hand remained upon the table, where it had been cut off."

"A search was made, but all to no use. The murderers had made good their escape. The only clew ever found to the body was that a man had seen the body of a woman floating in the river, below the town, the next day, but having no boat, was unable to recover it."

"When I arrived in the place, I recovered the hand that had once been that of my wife. It was in the possession of a naturalist, who had caused it to be artificially solidified or petrified, and had attached to the wrist a silver chain, at one end of which was a handsome stiletto. I bought the hand, and ever after carried it with me, on my travels, until some weeks ago, I lost it from my saddle-bag, in the mountains."

"Well, little remains to be told. I had not yet accomplished my vengeance, so I set forth."

"I finally got on a shadowy trail of my victims, and never left it—never lost track of it entirely. But, like Dickens's 'Artful Dodger,' they dodged me from time to time until I became satisfied they were working toward me. I then organized my band, and being penniless, was forced to resort to highway business for means, until they ran into my trap. They came at last, as you see, and here they are, at the mercy of the man whose life they blighted!"

Mormon Bill's concluding words were uttered in a stern, ringing tone, that caused the prisoners to shudder, and shrink from beneath his blazing gaze.

"I don't wonder you are revengeful, captain!" Lily said. "Will you seek vengeance to-night?"

"No!" was the fierce response; "I am not quite ready. Your duty is to stay here and guard these devil's imps until I have perfected my arrangements. Let them not escape at the peril of your life! There is one thing yet to be done. Then—vengeance shall be mine!"

He did not mention what yet remained to be done, but turning abruptly, strode from the rendezvous, across the plateau, and down the mountain-side.

Lily did not call after him.

He did not dare to.

But, he nodded his head significantly as he gazed at the cowering wretches at his feet, and thought.

"Ha! ha! I'd not like to be in your berth. You sinned the wrong tree when you blasted Mormon Bill's happiness!"

CHAPTER X.

A TERRIBLE FIGHT FOR LIFE.

WHEN Mormon Bill got back to Grogville, it lacked

an hour of daydawn, and he calculated he would be able to slip into the Blazing Brand Hotel, which was an all-night house, without attracting attention.

When he arrived at the point where the water-gap opened into the pocket, he was halted by the guard, who, at the muzzle of a rifle, demanded to know his name.

"I am Benjamin Butterfly!" was the prompt answer.

"Who?"

"Benjamin Butterfly, of the Blazing Brand Hotel."

"Ho! ho! and what were you doing out o' ther camp at night?"

"None of your business, sir. I go and come as I please, I reckon."

"Oh! ye do, eh? Well, pass on, but I'd advise you not ter go skulking around too much at night after this, yer know."

"Why not?"

"Because ther mayor wouldn't like it."

"To the devil with the mayor!" growled Mormon Bill, and passed on.

Several miners were lounging about the entrance of the Blazing Brand when he reached it, who eyed him curiously, but he scarcely deigned them a glance, and passed on up to his room.

The next couple of hours he improved in sleep, and when he awoke, the sun was shining brightly.

While he was making his toilet, he heard a hubbub of voices in the street below, and looking out of the window, saw that a considerable crowd of citizens had collected, who were excited over something, early as was the hour.

It never occurred to the Avenger that he was the cause of the commotion, and he went on, completing his toilet quite leisurely.

When he had finished, he put on his hat and sauntered down-stairs.

When he entered the bar-room, he saw that it was well filled with miners and the toughest citizens, French Ferd heading the list.

Bill instantly became the target for many pairs of eyes, and the glances leveled at him were not particularly of a friendly nature.

He observed this, but walked composedly up to the bar and asked the bartender to fix him up a cocktail, something he had not been known to do since coming to Grogville.

The crowd looked on amazed, and some of them were displeased that they were not invited to partake of a morning nerve-bracer.

When Mormon Bill had "downed" his "medicine," he turned from the bar to find himself confronted by his honor, the mayor, who looked even more disagreeable than was his usual wont.

"Good-morning!" he said, gruffly. "I suppose you have taken note of ther crowd that's assembled here, sir? D'ye know what et means?"

"I don't know that I have t ken the trouble to make any surmises on the matter," Bill replied, with a cool stare at the new ruler of the camp.

"Well, then, I'll have to inform you that we have voted you to be a suspicious character, who, like as not, is in partnership with Deadwood Dick, an' et becomes our duty to take you in."

"Pshaw! you don't say so!"

"Yes, I say so, and am right here, while I'm sayin' it, as you will perceive."

"Well! well! How strange. So you're going to take me in?"

"We are, in peace."

"Indeed! But, my good man, may be you forgit that it occasionally takes twice one to make a bargain. For instance you might get taken in, yourself, instead of me."

"No danger of that. I am the mayor of this town, and I have ordered your arrest, and the people will stand by me."

"Ah! Well, on what grounds have you ordered my arrest?"

"You're a suspicious character, an' we don't purpose to allow no sech in this camp!"

"How do you make out that I am a suspicious character may I inquire?"

Mormon Bill was perfectly composed, apparently, but there was a gleam in his eyes that told of rising passion.

"Well, in the first place, yer loafin' 'bout the camp, doin' nothin' and tryin' to play off gentleman which don't look quite straight. Then, again, a number o' the miners have seen a pigeon fly in an' out o' yer room, what carried messages. Then, ter cap the climax, you were absent from ther camp, somewhere in the mountains, all last night. Where was you, now?"

"That, sir, is emphatically no one's business, but my own."

"Oh! of course—sure, certain! We expected ye ter say that!" French Ferd sneered. "It wouldn't be policy for ye ter tell where you was, 'cause you'd be givin' yourself dead away. But, ye see, we happen ter know where ye was. You was up in ther mountains, plottin' mischief with Deadwood Dick, curse you!"

"You're a liar to your face!" Mormon Bill cried, fiercely. "I know no more of Deadwood Dick's whereabouts than you do yourself."

"Bah! you can't stuff that down us. You'll have to surrender, and stand yer trial!"

"I will, eh? Well, I rather guess not. I'll not surrender; and, more than that, I'll kill every man who attempts to lay a hand on me!" and as he spoke, he drew from his pocket, or somewhere about his person, a six-inch, keen-bladed knife, that looked murderous enough to appall the bravest heart.

French Ferd stepped back, with an oath.

"At him, boys, in a rush, and overpower him, but don't hurt him!" he yelled. "After his trial ye shall hev the fun o' seein' him do a jig in mid-air—the first hangin' hooray in Grogville!"

With shouts of acclamation, the majority of the men in the room, made a rush toward the Avenger, who stood grimly and resolutely at bay, his knife firmly clutched, and ready for use.

Then followed such a struggle as never before had been seen in the Blazing Brand Hotel, and was destined never to be seen there again.

The miners had calculated it would be an easy thing to capture the boarder, by massing a force of numbers against him, but they reckoned without their host.

With the power of a giant, Mormon Bill hurled them back, at the same time using his knife with deadly effect. It was no time for mercy now, and he spared none who came within his reach.

Curses and dying shrieks rent the air, and as the seconds flew by, and the conflict grew hotter, the crowd melted away to be trampled under foot, and be reinforced by others who now were determined that the man *should* be overcome.

And at last he was.

The conflict of one man against a multitude could not endure for long.

And after five minutes of most desperate resistance, Mormon Bill was overpowered, and bound hand and foot.

But, at what a cost!

The floor of the Blazing Brand Hotel was saturated with the blood of the dead and dying!

When the dead and wounded were hauled apart, and the full number ascertained, a cry of horror burst from the lips of those who had escaped Bill's fury.

"Lynch the cuss!" yelled a miner, who had lost a brother.

"Hurrah! string him up!" howled another.

"Revenge! revenge!" came from a third.

"No yer don't!" roared French Ferd, jumping upon the bar, and flourishing a pair of revolvers. "Ye'r a pack o' fools. What d'yer want to do—send ther cuss off so easy as *that*? Not by a big sight. He's goin' ter hev a trial, an' then, each man as wants ter pay a dollar inter ther city treasury shall have a shoot at him, wi' a gun. D'ye savvy? He shall be shot ter pieces by inches, beginnin' at the outer edges o' the figger!"

There was something so terrible in the proposal, that, for the instant, the crowd stared aghast.

Purty Pete, however, sounded an applauding yell of approval, after which the bloodthirsty crowd responded, uproariously.

A strong cabin or jail was one of the institutions of Grogville, and to this Mormon Bill was taken and locked in, and the jail was surrounded by a posse of armed men.

CHAPTER XI.

BIG BOOTS'S BARGAIN.

THE tragedy at the Blazing Brand Hotel, threw the town into such a violent commotion, that work was suspended in the mines, and the whole excited populace was gathered in the streets, or in the saloons.

Loud and strong were the anathemas against Butterfly Ben, as, of course, he was known to the citizens, and eagerly the mass of miners discussed the vengeance that was to be wreaked upon the prisoner.

Great "fun," they all agreed, it would be, to stand up and shoot the prisoner as full of holes as a sieve—shoot him to death by inches, a novelty that they would not only keenly enjoy, but which would bring enduring notoriety to their budding metropolis.

Much eagerness was manifested to know when his honor, the mayor, would order the event, and this desire to know, was not destined to be gratified, for a time, for, after ordering the prisoner to jail, and under guard, French Ferd had sought his own private apartment at his hotel.

It was not until nearly noon, that a placard was nailed up in full view, on the front of the Casino.

It contained the following:

"NOTICE:

"In hopes that I may be able to secure others of Deadwood Dick's party, and thereby make the execution larger and on a grander scale, Benjamin Butterfly will be tried to-morrow morning, at sunrise, and dealt with, immediately afterward.

"In the mean time, citizens of Grogville, you are commanded to put forth your best efforts to secure Deadwood Dick and his allies, and to see to it that Butterfly Ben does not escape.

"FERDINAND FRENCH,
Mayor of Grogville."

The crowd did not receive the announcement of delay to their anticipations with any too good grace, and one or two of the bolder roughs freely suggested that the people ought to take the matter into their own hands and lynch the prisoner at once. No such move was made, however, and the likelihood of an outbreak was not great.

During the afternoon, as French Ferd sat in his room, enjoying a bottle of wine in private, he suddenly became aware that a man was seated just across the table from him, and that the man was no one else than Deadwood Dick, in his disguise of Big Boots, the bullwhacker, whose countenance was drawn into a ludicrous grin, as he noted the mayor's astonishment.

"Curses and furies! *you* here!" French Ferd cried.

"How did you get in?"

"Walked in, o' course, yer Honor."

"What do you want here, you vagabond? I've a mind to blow yer brains out."

"Don't!" Dick said, deprecatingly. "I hain't got many, an' I hev ter work 'em hard ter raise a drink. I was makin' free o' yer hospitality t'other night, wasn't I?"

"Curse you, yes!"

"Waal, neow, did you think I'd be so mean as not ter pay you, yer honor?"

"You pay? Bah!"

"Nary a bahl! I hed ten snifters at a quarter apiece—two-fifty. Thar's yer kernoodleum!"

And two dollars and fifty cents did the pseudo bullwhacker slap down on the table, with a bang.

French Ferd looked too astonished to give utterance to a word. Here was something he could not understand. Never before had he known Big Boots to pay for a drink. What liquor he drank he always got by "cheeking" it.

"Where the deuce did you get any money?" Ferd demanded.

"'Twas give ter me. But, say, I've got suthin' ter tell yer."

"Well?"

"Ye orter not let thet Butterfly be alone in ther jail."

"Why not?"

"Why, yer see, he might get loose an' kill hisself, an' then we wouldn't hev ther fun o' seein' him git shot."

"Do you want to see him shot?"

"Do I? Well, I sh'uld hum a hymn. D'yer know thet air Butterfly aire ther dog-goned meanest ger-loot in seven counties? As many as er dozzing times hev I axed him fer enuff ter buy me a smile an' never a-oncet would he tip me. Oh! but he war a bloody mean cuss—so darned mean thet ef he thort et would spite ye any, he'd commit suicide."

"I have thought he might try such a thing. But, then, there is no danger of his getting loose."

"Dunno 'bout that. A feller as could fight like him could do 'most anything. Didn't know I was in ther melee, did yer? I got in one blow at ther cuss's ear, an' thet kinder lamed him so thet et wasn't so hard ter nab him. Hope you'll give him an inside guard, fer et would be a shame ef he war ter up an' spoil all ther fun."

"I don't reckon any o' ther boys would fancy getting nearer to him than they aire now!" French Ferd said, with a shrug.

"Pshaw! I wouldn't mind it. I'd jest like ther fun o' plecterin' ter him how we're goin' ter cook his goose to-morrow."

French Ferd's eyes sparkled.

This was something he would like done, namely: have Butterfly tortured the few remaining hours he yet had to live.

"You're a trump, Big Boots!" he said, pouring out a glass of wine, and shoving it across the table to the visitor. "You go an' keep company wi' ther prisoner, and make him as uncomfortable as you know how, and fifty dollars shall be yours, to-morrow. Besides, you shall have the first shot at the prisoner."

"Then, I'm yer hummin' bird, you bet! Ef I don't keep ther feller in sech a narvous sweat that he can't tell which from what, ye kin call me a liar, an' ride me out o' town on a rail stuck full o' darnin' needles."

"Very well. I'll fix it."

The mayor pounded loudly on the table, and in a moment, Purty Pete entered. He looked astonished when he saw Big Boots.

"Pete!" French Ferd said, "take Big Boots to the jail, and tell the guard it is my order that he be admitted to the inside of the jail as a guard, to prevent the possibility of Butterfly getting loose of his bonds, and committing suicide. When it comes dark, you are to take Big Boots's place, and he will give you instructions what to do."

Purty Pete made no reply, but left the room, Dick accompanying him.

Since getting thrown out of the window, Purty Pete had not opened hostilities against Big Boots, who, he had evidently made up his mind, was too much for him.

So the two marched side by side to the jail, where the dwarf gave French Ferd's orders, Big Boots adding an explanation of the necessity of preventing the prisoner from committing suicide, and thereby spoiling the "fun" of the morrow.

After some little delay, the bumner was locked within the log jail with the prisoner.

His little game for getting an interview with Mormon Bill, had certainly worked like a charm.

The jail was a single-roomed, story-and-a-half log structure, with a view to strength being built of three thicknesses of logs. The door was heavy and tight-fitting, and there was but one little window, up near the roof. A person within might yell, and yet could only be faintly heard on the outside.

The interior contained but a dim light, after the door was closed, but Deadwood Dick managed to make out that the prisoner was lying upon the log floor, at the further side of the room.

Dick crossed over, and knelt beside him, to encounter the Avenger's burning gaze.

"Well, boss, how d'ye feel?" Dick asked, cordially.

"Rather a hard bed, ain't it?"

"Rather!" Bill replied, dryly. "Who are you?"

"A friend, who got in here by a ruse—ostensibly to keep you from suicide, you see."

"You're not Lily?"

"Oh! no, I am"—here he lowered his voice to a whisper—"the much-wanted Deadwood Dick, *alias* Big Boots!"

"Ah! I see you are the bullwhacker, now. So that's a disguise, is it?"

"Yes."

"What brings you here?"

"To see if I can't be of some service to you. If you are not got out of here, ere another day dawns, you're a doomed man."

"Bah! what do I care? My life is a wreck, anyhow, and I care not how soon it is ended."

"Tut! tut! A man should want to live until called

by the Master. I am aware that you've had your trouble, but, what of that? There's much to live for yet. My whole life, nearly, has been a life of trouble and fighting against enemies. Yet, I'm still top of the heap!"

"What do you know about my trouble, pray?" the prisoner demanded, in astonishment.

"All!" Dick replied. "When you went to your mountain rendezvous, last night, I followed you. I was within hearing distance of you when you told the story of your wrongs to your lieutenant."

"The deuce you say! Well?"

"I became interested in you, and have resolved to make a bold stroke for your liberation."

"Don't you do it. You will only get yourself into hot water, without doing any good."

"I don't fear for that. I owe this camp a good cleaning out, any ow, and there's no time so appropriate as the present. How many men have you in your hand?"

"Even ten, aside from myself."

"Not enough, quite. Do you know where I could increase the force?"

"Give Lily, my lieutenant, an hour's notice, and he could supply a dozen more."

"Good! That would be as many as I would want, if they have the stuff in them. Write me an order to Lily, giving full instructions and particulars, so that I get command, and I'll do all in my power to get you out of here."

Mormon Bill hesitated.

"I'm not so sure I want to get out," he declared. "What's the use? The only thing I have to live for is revenge, and the job to-day is about as much crime as I want to answer for. If I were executed, Lily would carry out my intentions as regards the party at the Fort. So there's nothing to live for."

"Supposing your wife were living?"

"That would alter matters."

"Would you seek, if free, to hunt her down and wreak vengeance on her?"

Mormon Bill laughed wildly.

"Would I?" he chuckled. "Well, I should say so! If satisfied she was living I would search to the end of the earth to find her. But my vengeance would not be such as you would suppose—oh! no. If I found her, and she had not really so sunken into the slough of vice as to be beyond my reach, I would lift her up, take her to my bosom, and, a happy man, hie myself to where the fame of to-day's work would never find or disturb us."

"Nobly spoken! I see you are a man with good in you, though the whole world may believe you bad. But, do not despair. I believe your wife still lives."

"What?"

"Just as I say—I believe your wife still lives."

"Ah! I see. You seek to arouse me into better spirits."

"No, I do not. Listen, and I will tell you what causes my belief."

Dick then proceeded.

He told of finding the petrified hand, and his inclination to keep it; of the first mysterious message he had received, that had brought him to the present site of Grogville; of the second message he had received in the cavern, and the last one at his cabin; of the footfalls he had heard; of once seeing a woman's face at his window; and concluded by narrating how he had slipped a drawing of the hand into the prisoner's pocket.

Mormon Bill listened without an interruption, but the heaving of his chest, and the eager gleaming of his eyes told plain enough that his emotion was deep.

"Good God!" burst from his lips when Dick had finished; "can it be possible that she still lives?"

"Does it not look that way?" Dick answered. "It does to me, anyhow."

"Describe the face you saw at the window!" Bill gasped, breathlessly.

Dick did so the best he could, remembering only from the brief glimpse he had obtained of it.

"It's *Irre*—it's my wife!" the prisoner cried, excitedly. "Glory be to God! Man, I must get out of here—must!—do you hear? I'll not stay! I'll not die! They shall not kill me! I will get free, and find my wife!"

For a time, he was fairly wild, but Dick finally got him composed, and they had a long talk.

Dick released Bill's hands, until he wrote a message to Lieutenant Lily, and then bound them again but so loosely that Bill could free himself, if necessary.

The afternoon was well advanced, when the faint sound of yelling was wafted into the jail.

It grew louder, and the yells sounded like those of triumph, rather than rage.

"What's up now?" Bill demanded.

"I don't know!" Dick replied.

"A moment later, he started, violently.

"Good Heaven!" burst from his lips.

He had heard a name yelled, in a coarse, blatant voice.

The name was—

"*Kerlamity Jane!*"

CHAPTER XII.

CALAMITY TO CALAMITY.

BIG BOOTS, or Deadwood Dick, had not departed from French Ferd's office more than an hour, when "his honor" was apprised by Purty Pete that a couple of men in the bar-room were desirous of obtaining an interview with the boss of the town.

Ferdinand had by this time drained the contents of the wine bottle, and was in a decidedly sleepy and irritable humor.

"Who aire they?" he growled—"what do they want?"

"They're an Irishman, an' er Dutchman, an' they say they want see ye on 'portant bizness."

"Bah! to the blazes with 'em! They're only a pair o' fellers wid no money!" Ferd growled. "Send 'em away, an' tell 'em the mayor can't help 'em."

The dwarf started to leave the room, but as he did so, the door opened, and two men stalked in.

Lo! and behold, they were none other than Dancing Dennis, and Limburger Jakie, whom we last saw as prisoners in Deadwood Dick's cave.

"Arrah! good-mornin' to yez!" Dennis cried, striding forward and putting out his hand to French Ferd. "Do I hev the exquisite honor av sphakin' wid the right honorable mayor av this place?"

"Yas, I'm the mayor. What d'ye want?" French Ferd demanded, in thunderous tones.

"Och! now, phy you sphake so su' dint, likes yez w'u'd skeer wan's wits ontirely out of him. Be aisy, sur, be aisy, fer it's a mather of biggest importance we'd be doin' wid yes—eh, Jakie?"

"Yaw, dot vas drue," Jake agreed. "Ve haff some dings to dells you, vot you giff pig pile money for."

"Oh! that's your racket is it? Well, go ahead, and let's hear what you have to reveal," and with a wave of his hand the mayor dismissed Purty Pete from the room, at the same time motioning the visitors to be seated.

"Now, go ahead," he said. "If you have anything to say that's worth listening to, say it."

"Well, ye see, sur," Dennis began, "over a month ago, me an' me pard, whose name is Limburger Jakie, we was taken captive by the loikes av a spalpeen called Deadwood Dick."

"Hal Deadwood Dick, you say?"

"Yis, sur. We was taken prisoners, an' since thin, it's shet up we've bin in a cave in the mountains, wid Deadwood Dick's wife as a guard over us, whin the devil hisself wasn't about."

"Deadwood Dick's wife?"

"Yis, sur—a foine-lukin' woman, fot wears briches, the same as any ither man. Yez see, sur, tha while we was kipt prisoners, we had a chance ter pick up a bit o' news, an' we learned, sur, that Deadwood Dick claimed these moines, an' was goin' to raise the devil wid yer ducks fer workin' 'em, an' thet you had offered a reward fer him."

"Well?"

"Well, meself an' Jakie were anxious ter escape, as yez may belave, sur, an' we worked at our bonds, little by little, until finally, we not only hed 'em loosened, sur, but hed our plans formed for the makin' av a penry, sur. We knew that ye'd be purty near as glad of gittin' Deadwood Dick's wife, sur, as yez w'u'd the captain himself, an' so, this mawnin', yer honor, we broke loose, Calamity Jane our pris'ner, an' heer we are, fer ter negotiate!"

And, having delivered himself of this information, Dancing Dennis leaned complacently back in his chair, and looked at Grogville's newly-indorsed mayor.

French Ferd had idly listened, apparently taking little or no interest in what the Irishman was saying.

"And so you have captured this alleged wife of Deadwood Dick?" he finally asked.

"Shure, an' we have, sur!"

"What do you propose to do with her?"

"Sell her, yer honor."

"To whom?"

"Bedad, an' who else to but yerself, sur? Phy, phat's bitin' ye, sur? Didn't yez offer a reward for Deadwood Dick or any av them connicted wid him, sur?"

"I did. What price do you set on this prize of yours, delivered immediately into my hands?"

Dennis exchanged glances with Jakie, and scratched his brick-red head.

"Phat d'ye say, Jakie? Shall we'z be afther lettin' her go so chape, as we first proposed?"

"Yaw! yaw!" assented Jakie. "V'y for you stand mit drifles on leedle piznesh madders like dot? We want money, and we make no monopolies."

"Faith, an' ye'r right. We'll not be so mane as to stand for a few cints. Yer honor, we'll let yez hev tha gurrul, in good order, for fifty thousand dollars."

French Ferd burst into a hoarse guffaw.

"Why, you ignorant coyotes!" he cried. "What do you take me for, anyhow?"

"For a rich, honorable, an' distinguished gentleman, sur," avowed Dennis, flatteringly.

"Yaw! you looks yooost like der Union Bercific Railroadts!" complimented Jakie.

"But you'll likely find out I am neither!" Ferd assured. "If you have Deadwood Dick's woman, as you claim, I'll tell you what I'll do. Bring her here at once, and if I am convinced that she is the party she is claimed to be, I'll give you a thousand dollars—the same reward offered for ther outlaw himself. If that's not satisfactory to you, why—git!"

Dennis and Jakie once more looked at each other with inquiring and disappointed expressions of countenance. Evidently the new mayor's offer had fallen far short of their expectation.

"Faith, an' that is a bast ly low offer, is it not, Jakie?" Dennis asked, with a deprecatory shake of the head.

"Dot's vot's der matter!" Jakie assented. "Vot for der shendlemon dake us 'or—a pair of shackasses? I say no! Sgalamity Shane she haff money someveres, und she bay more ash der mayor. Vot you tink?"

"Jist my idea, ivery bit. Calamity Jane give us more to get free than we would be afther gittin' here. Coome! Let's be thravelin'. Time is money!"

"Und money vas visky," Jakie allowed, with a

grin. "Der more money vot we got, der more visky."

"Shure your head is the liveliest av thim all, me darlint. Come."

"Stop!" French Ferd cried. "Fetch the woman here and I'll give you five thousand, between you. That's my best offer. I'll not give you half a cent more."

Jakie and Dennis had by this time reached the door, but they paused and held a low-toned conference, which was ended by Dennis finally exclaiming:

"All roight, Misther Mayor. We'll bring the gurrul in half an hour," and they took their departure.

When they were gone, French Ferd chuckled softly to himself.

"If this be true, that these fellows have really got Deadwood Dick's wife, it will indeed be quite an acquisition to secure her. To maintain the foothold I have got here among the people, I must needs make to-morrow's event as breezy and suggestive of my influence as possible. The addition of Calamity Jane would be a decided hit."

"As for paying these chaps, I happen to have just the r'quired amount in counterfeit money, and they're too deuced dumb to detect the difference between it and the true stuff."

He left his room and went out upon the hotel piazza to await the return of Dennis and Jakie, which he was somewhat doubtful about; but within the half-hour he saw them coming down the street, leading a male-attired young woman between them, whose hands were tied behind her back.

It was indeed Calamity Jane who had fallen into their power.

However, she walked with as firm a step and as haughty a carriage as though she were at liberty, and the defiant gleam in her eyes showed that she was far from conquered, even if she was a captive.

By the time the trio had reached the veranda or piazza of the Casino a considerable crowd had collected, curious to know who the fair prisoner was.

Calamity was conducted in front of French Ferd, and then Dancing Dennis said:

"Yer honor, we have brought yez the gurrul: this is Calamity Jane, the wife of Deadwood Dick. Now, sir, it's the money we're after wantin'."

"Wait, and you'll git it," French Ferd growled. "Young woman, are you the wife of Deadwood Dick, the outlaw?"

"I am the wife of Deadwood Dick!" Calamity replied, coolly.

"Ah! Did I not see you once before—in Satan's Snap?"

"You did."

"You registered as Hazel Halstead, didn't ye?"

"I did."

"Well, what have ye got to say fer yourself?"

"Nothing in particular, more than that if I am not released, the people of this camp will suffer."

"Humph! You kinder take to threatening, do you? That won't do ye any good. You are an outlaw as much as your husband, and liable to the penalty. Therefore, you will be executed at sunrise to-morrow, unless ye come to terms."

"Terms?"

"Yes. There is but one condition by which you can secure your liberty."

"What is that?"

"By giving me such information as will lead to the immediate capture of Deadwood Dick!"

Calamity burst into a scornful laugh.

"Do you think me crazy?" she demanded—"that I would give up my husband simply to save myself? If you do you make a grand mistake."

"Then off to jail you go, and to-morrow you die along with another of your accursed confederates—Butterfly Ben!" French Ferd cried, savagely. "There's goin' to be no monkeyin' about this matter."

Then, turning to the crowd, he added:

"Feller-citizens, ye see I'm sparin' no pains to give ye a rousin' entertainment, to-morrow. At a cost of five thousand dollars, out of my own pocket, I have secured another prize, in the person of Calamity Jane, Deadwood Dick's wife!"

A ringing cheer went up, during which was heard—"Long life to French Ferd!"

"Take the woman to jail, Pete!" the mayor ordered, as soon as the cheering somewhat subsided, "and tell the feller, Big Boots, he needn't stay on guard duty, any longer."

"Hold on, sur!" spoke up Dennis. "Eefore yez take tha gurrul away we be afther wantin' our money, sur."

"Go ahead with the girl!" re-ordered French.

"As for the money, me noble dukes, walk into my parlor, said the spider to the fly, and you shall have it!"

That settled it.

Purty Pete, and one of his associates, marched Calamity off toward the jail, while the mayor conducted Dennis and Jakie into the hotel, to his private room, where he proposed to satisfy their greed for gain with five thousand dollars in bogus money.

Behind Calamity Jane and her two captors, followed the howling mob, whose yells reached the jail, and gave Deadwood Dick and Mormon Bill considerable uneasiness.

"Calamity Jane!" yelled the mob.

"Hooray! Kerlamity Jane!"

"Shout, brothers, shout! We'll hev a reg'lar picnic, when ther sun begins ter rise!"

Such and other cries rent the air, as the crowd neared the jail.

Calamity walked with the same firm step as of yore, nothing in her coolly handsome face betokening alarm.

She was only too well aware that the prospects ahead were not of a reassuring nature, but it made

no difference; she had never flinched, yet, no matter how deadly her peril, and argued, sensibly, that it was too late in the day to do so, now.

If Dick was not a prisoner, which was evident, judging by French Ferd's offer of compromise, Calamity had faith that the Western Detective Prince would not allow these denizens of the mines to visit their spite upon her.

The jail was reached, the door unlocked, and Purty Pete and his companion led the fair prisoner inside, the crowd being kept at bay.

"Hillo! Who hev ye thar?" Big Boots demanded, as the trio entered—"enuther pris'ner?"

"Yes, enuther pris'ner!" the dwarf growled, "an' the capt'in sed yer needn't stay in here, no longer, as 'twan't no use."

"Durned ef I ain't glad!" Big Boots averred—"powerful glad. Tain't no snap, I tell yer! Who's ther pris'ner?"

"Kerlamity Jane, w'ot aire Deadwood Dick's wife!" the dwarf assured. "She's goin' ter git salivated along wi' his butterfly nibs, to-morrow."

"Hooray! Won't et be a reg'ler old Waterloo, tho'?" Big Boots cried. "Thar'll be blud on ther moon, ter-morrer, or my name ain't Big Butes, ther banker's daughter! Come on! Sence I'm relieved from duty, I'm jest goin' ter do ther moist act, by settin' up ther whisky fer all hands," and giving Calamity Jane but a cursory glance, the pseudo-bullwhacker left the jail, followed by the dwarf and his assistant.

As might be supposed, it did not take long for the crowd to find out that Big Boots proposed to "set 'em up," and of oge accord they followed him to the Blazing Brand Hotel, where the drinks were ordered and set forth.

As they entered the Blazing Brand, three men stood upon the piazza of the Casino, across the street.

They were French Ferd, Dancing Dennis, and Limburger Jakie, the latter two having just received their pay for delivering up Calamity Jane.

"Hil d'yez see tha feller, yander, wid the big brogans?" Dennis suddenly cried. "By me soul, thet's him, himself, is it not, Jakie?"

"Who?" suddenly demanded French Ferd.

"Phy! Deadwood Dick to be sure!" was the response.

"You pig fool!" growled Jakie. "V'y for you don'd vas sell oud for somedings, mitoud giffin' everyt'ing away vor free lunch? You ought to haff you neck doslogated!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A NOVEL ESCAPE.

THE announcement of Dancing Dennis, that Deadwood Dick was in Grogville, masquerading as Big Boots, caused a cry of exultance from the lips of French Ferd, and, after procuring a drink of liquor at his own bar, he left the Casino, and crossed over to the Blazing Brand, intent on capturing or killing the man of all men, whom of late he had grown to fear.

Just why he should fear Deadwood Dick, individually, he could hardly have told, except that he surmised, should Dick strike, he would most likely aim at the ruler of the camp, first.

So, over to the Blazing Brand the new mayor strode, feeling sure that he had his man, at last, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

When he entered the hotel, he saw the crowd all ranged at the bar, or as near to it as was possible, and in their midst was Big Boots, at whose expense the treat was being had.

He saw French Ferd, as he strode into the room, but appeared to entertain no suspicion in regard to his errand—indeed, scarcely gave him the second glance.

French Ferd did not immediately approach the bummer, for his mind was not fully made up just how to proceed to capture him.

The fearful example left by Mormon Bill, in the same room, not many hours before, was a warning that it was likely to prove dangerous to attack Deadwood Dick, openly.

To be sure, he could be shot down—instantly killed, for that matter, but, that was not what the new mayor desired. It would be a much greater triumph, he argued, to take Deadwood Dick a prisoner, and publicly execute him, than to shot him down, without warning.

So French Ferd began to lay his plans for such a capture, and it did not take him long to decide upon one that promised to work well.

Lounging up to the bar, he cried out:

"Hello! who's doing this, anyhow?"

"Big Boots! Big Boots!" cried several of the miners, who, as usual, were enthusiastic over their luck at getting another free drink.

"Big Boots aire ther chap what's doin' et fine!"

"Then, Signor Big Boots, allow me the honor of drinking your health!" French Ferd cried, pouring out a brimming glass.

"Go ahead!" Big Boots grunted. "Big snakes to you! I ain't so durned stingy wi' my likker, as you be, an' ye'r perfectly welcome ter pickle yerself in it, ef ye wanter."

"I'm not stingy with my liquor, nor with my money!" was the gruff response. "To prove that, I'm ready to stand treat to all the crowd can drink, on a bet!"

"On a bet?"

"That's what I said."

"What kind of a bet?"

"Why, I'll bet you I can do something that you can't, namely, make a standing jump from the floor into a flour barrel. I'll do the act, and am ready to bet that you can't."

"I'll have ter go ye on that, Mister Mare. What d'ye wanter bet?"

"All the liquor the crowd can drink for an hour against ten dollars."

"It's a go! Go ahead wi' yer circus; an' by ther great horned ace o' Honduras, ef I can't do anything you can, the ten dollars shall be yourn, sure's I'm ther big-futted banty from Butte City."

French Ferd did not insist that the money should be put up, as all he cared about was to get the bumper to jump into the barrel; then it would be an easy matter to rush upon him and capture him.

At least, French Ferd so calculated.

A flour barrel was procured, placed in the center of a ring formed by the crowd, and French Ferd pulled off his coat and stepped forward.

"This ain't no easy job, gents!" he declared, "but I will endeavor to show you that one man can do what many another man can not."

He then walked over to the barrel, and, making a spring, landed down in the inside of the receptacle, the top head of which, of course, had been previously removed.

It was a clever jump, and the crowd cheered vociferously.

"There you are, big feet!" Ferd cried, stepping out of the barrel triumphantly. "D'ye think you kin do that?"

"Well, I should snicker!" Big Boots declared. "I kin do thet jest as easy as rollin' off a log, an' easier too. Why, I kin jump inter two bar'ls, one a-top the other, ef ye only give me the chance!"

"Bah! go ahead, you fool! You can't jump into the one, let alone the two."

"What'll ye bet?" Big Boots demanded eagerly. "Ef you've got anything as sez I can't, jest poke et's head out where I can see it," and flopping his arms, something as a rooster would its wings, Big Boots leaped into the air, turned a complete somersault, and landed safely on his feet.

The crowd gave an appreciative yell, while French Ferd uttered a grunt of disgust to see that his enemy was so nimble.

"Come! What er yer goin' to do?" Big Boots demanded. "Ye let on ye'r sech a bettin' chap, why don't ye show yer spurs? What'll ye bet I can't jump inter two bar'ls, one a set on top o' the other, an' both heads out o' the top bar'l? Spit it out, now, an' I'm yer man, tooth and toe-nail."

The expressions of approval were so pronounced, that French Ferd felt it necessary to do something to meet the bumper, and "go him one better."

"What'll I bet?" he echoed. "Why, anything you want, providing we have a proper understanding of the bet. Do you wish to bet you can make what is known as a standing jump?"

"That's jest what I do want bet! I'll take a persion in ther tracks whar you stood, an' I'll jump straight upward, an' come down inside the barrels."

"You're a fool. Such a jump is impossible. Why, I'll bet you my hotel against your head that you can't do it!"

"If I win, I get your hotel, and all that's in it?"

"Yes. And if you fail, in three attempts, your head belongs to me for a football!"

"It's a bargain. Shake!"

Big Boots put out his white, shapely hand—a hand so hard at contrast with his general appearance.

"Never mind the shaking part!" French Ferd growled. "Go ahead wi' yer jump."

"That I will!" was the answer. "Get another barrel, an' knock both heads out o' et."

Another barrel was soon procured, both heads were knocked out, and the shell remaining, was placed on top of the first barrel.

This made a complete tube, about five feet in height.

It must, indeed, be a clever jumper who could bound into the air, and land down within the tube, without personal injury to himself; yet Big Boots did not seem to regard it as an extraordinary feat, for he surveyed the barrels, adjusted them properly, and then smiled broadly.

"Waal, boyees, hyar we go!" he said, jovially. "Et's a hotel or a head, and I'm inclined to believe that it's a hotel. If it is, you may bet we will all dine together!"

With this assurance, he once more faced the barrels.

He spat on his hands, rubbed them together, and then was suddenly seen to rise into the air.

As if lifted by some mechanical power, he soared straight upward, and then shot down out of sight, within the barrel inclosure.

His head had scarcely disappeared from view, when French Ferd swung his hat in the air, with a triumphant yell.

"Quick! boys!" he cried. "The man in them barrels is Deadwood Dick! Pile onto him! We've got him sure, this time!"

Although the words rung through every part of the bar-room distinctly, the crowd stared at the new mayor as if they doubted his sanity, making no move whatever to attack the barreled Richard.

"At him! at him! secure him!" fairly shrieked French Ferd. "Shoot him! shoot him!"

This furious delivered order was caused by seeing the pyramid of barrels rise upward, and Big Boots's feet protrude from underneath the bottom barrel; when, with exceeding swiftness, the pyramid moved toward the door, which stood wide open.

"At him! riddle the bar'ls wi' bullets!" French Ferd fairly howled, as he saw his prey slipping away out of his grasp. "You cursed fools, do you not see he is escaping? That man is Deadwood Dick!"

By the time the astonished crowd could draw a weapon to fire, the pyramid of barrels stood in the doorway, and the few bullets leveled at it did no harm.

A moment more and it was out of sight, and when the crowd rushed from the Blazing Brand, they saw the barrels lying in the street, but the man they had shielded gone!

A search was made, but no trace of Deadwood Dick was found.

Had the earth opened up, and swallowed him, he could not have disappeared more surely!

French Ferd's fury knew no bounds, for he felt positive that Deadwood Dick would seek a speedy revenge.

He endeavored to find Dennis and Jakie, but they, too, had been seen to leave the pocket, and were nowhere to be found.

Leaving the townspeople to be watchful among themselves, French retired once more to his room at the Casino, his face dark and gloomy.

"Curses take the luck!" he growled; "this last escape of the outlaw, unnerves me, for I fear him more than I fear any other man. He has sworn vengeance against me and the people of this camp, and now that we have captured his wife, he won't be slow to put it into execution. Naturally, he will seek to strike me, first!"

The conclusion appeared to give him much uneasiness.

He rapped upon the table fiercely, and the summons speedily brought Purty Pete into the room.

"Bring me a bottle of wine!" the mayor ordered, gruffly, "and then go hunt up Goff, to come here at once. Cause a double guard to be placed over the jail, and constantly urge the miners to be on the outlook for Deadwood Dick, and shoot him down, at sight. D'ye hear?"

"Yes, boss."

"All right! See that you do. You can go."

The dwarf nodded, and took his departure.

The wine was soon brought to French Ferd, and he helped himself to a couple of brimming glasses, and then began to pace to and fro.

"It's my only course," he muttered. "I'm hanged if I want to stay around here and be murdered—not much! We made a good haul, in the bank transaction, and the money will keep me indefinitely. So after I settle any objections Goff might have to my departure, I'll steal quietly away, and let Deadwood Dick take his vengeance out of the people, instead of the people's mayor."

The conclusion seemed in a measure to quiet his uneasiness, combined with frequent drinks of the wine, so that by the time Giles Goff arrived his may-orship was feeling quite comfortable.

Just before Goff's entrance, French Ferd had dissolved a white powder in the bottom of one of the two glasses on the table, and when Goff entered, and took a seat at the table, both glasses were filled, and one pushed toward the cashier.

"Join me in a snifter, then I'll tell you what I want," Ferd said. "It's better wine than I sell over the bar."

"Thanks. I don't usually drink wine, but will conform with your wishes, this time," Goff said, and the wine was swallowed.

Goff was a tall, brawny fellow, who did not look as if afraid of the ordinary run of men, and his countenance had something sinister and villainous in its expression.

His eyes were keen, and as their inquiring glance rested upon French Ferd, that individual shifted uneasily on his chair.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you, Mr. French?" Goff inquired, lighting a cigar—"anything in particular?"

"Oh! no; but you see I've something to tell you. We've got to get up and light out of here."

"Eh?"

"Jest so. You have heard about Big Boots, being identified as Deadwood Dick and of his escape?"

"Yes."

"Well, he will make it lively for this camp, before many hours, and he'll strike right and left, without mercy, you mark my word."

"Do you really think so?"

"I know it. He won't do it single-handed, neither. He hasn't been keeping quiet for over a month, all for nothing. He has without doubt been getting a gang together, sufficient to make a strong and determined fight. There are plenty of men who would jump at the chance to join him in an attack. So, when it comes, I'm betting high we won't stand a ghost of a show toward defense. The risks are big we'll be shot down without quarter, and for my part, I don't care about passing in my checks quite yet!"

"Nor I!" Goff grunted, rather drowsily.

"So I presumed. Therefore, as we've made a fat haul, we'd better take time by the forelock, and vamoose while the chance is open."

"Just my idea. Heigh-ho! that wine must be deuced strong, for it makes me sleepy."

"It is old. But it isn't that. You're not as used to drinking as I am. Now, about our escape. Can you be ready, and meet me at the cache, at midnight?"

Goff made no response.

His chin had dropped upon his breast, and his head gradually sunk forward upon the table.

The drug administered by French Ferd was doing its work; Goff was expiring, without a struggle! This horrible act seemed only to affect French Ferd with diabolical glee, for, while he sat and drank glass after glass of the wine, until he had emptied the bottle, an occasional chuckle escaped his lips, and there was a triumphant gleam in his eyes.

When he was satisfied that all the power had left his victim's body, he arose and arranged the recumbent head upon the arm, on the table, in such a manner as to give the impression that Goff was fast asleep; then going through his pockets, and reliev-

ing him of what valuables he had, French Ferd left the room.

In the bar-room he met Purty Pete, and said: "Goff's in there, drunk," indicating the inner apartment, "so don't disturb him. He'll soon sleep it off."

He then passed from the Casino. Without, night had settled dark and muggy, over the mining camp.

French Ferd walked to the outskirts of the settlement, and there pausing, gazed back at the twinkling lights, with a grim laugh.

"Good by, citizens of Grogville!" he spoke in a loud tone; "you are about to lose your mayor, and Deadwood Dick is about to lose what dust this pocket has panned out. While you are enjoying the outlaw's vengeance, I will be enjoying much that you have toiled for. Now, for the cache!" and turning, he hurried rapidly toward the outlet to the locked valley.

True, he was leaving much behind, but the cached money more than made up for the loss, and then, too, was he not escaping with his life?

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK'S MISSION.

WHAT OF DEADWOOD DICK?

When French Ferd had proposed the jumping bout, in the Blazing Brand Hotel, Dick had at once suspected that something was the matter. Literally he had "smelt a very large-sized rat," whose proportions were magnified when he noticed Ferd's eager manner and saw the exultant gleam in the new mayor's eyes.

That, with the capture of Calamity, his identity was divulged, and that French Ferd wanted to get him into some trap, in which he could attack him with more safety, was Dick's conviction; so, knowing by experience that he could jump into the two barrels, he had made up his mind to adopt that expedient of getting out of the bar-room without getting seriously wounded.

How well he succeeded the reader has seen.

Once outside the door, he dodged around the corner of the hotel and bounded through a little window into the half-cellar in under the hotel.

Here he secreted himself among the barrels and boxes, and remained undisturbed for over an hour, no one appearing to think of looking for him so close to the vicinity.

When it was quite dark he crawled out of hiding.

He was now divested of his superfluous and ragged clothing, and his false hair and beard, and bore his natural appearance.

He managed to get to the stable in the rear of the hotel, and there secured his horse, and in half an hour was out of the locked valley, en route through Big Gulch at a lively gallop.

The mountain camp of Mormon Bill was his destination. He must lose no time in reaching it, for he must be back in Grogville or vicinity before day-break, with a force strong enough to rescue Calamity and Winthrop, or their doom would be a certainty.

So he spared not the spur, and his horse being fresh and strong, covered distance rapidly.

Only once he paused, to examine the map Mormon Bill had given him; then he dashed on, and at length spurred up the mountain path leading to Fort Freeze-Out.

The horse dropped down exhausted ere he reached the summit, and Dick was obliged to complete his journey on foot.

As he stepped upon the plateau, he found himself confronted by a burly man, and at the muzzle of a repeating rifle.

"Halt!" the sentinel cried. "Who are you and what do you want?"

"I am Deadwood Dick," was the prompt response, "and come from Mormon Bill with a message to Lieutenant Lily."

"Give the countersign, then."

"I have none to give. Call your lieutenant and I will give him my message."

The guard hesitated a moment and eyed Dick suspiciously; then he said:

"Wait here, then, till I call the lieutenant."

He strode off to the stone building, soon returning, accompanied by Lily.

"I have a message to you from Mormon Bill, who is in jail in Grogville!" Dick announced. "By reading it you will learn his wants!"

"Come this way," Lily said, receiving the paper.

Dick followed, and they entered the "Fort." The most of the members of the band were lounging around a fire, but Dick failed to discover the prisoners, whom he had seen on his previous visit.

Lieutenant Lily took Mormon Bill's letter to the fire and glanced it over eagerly.

Then he turned to Deadwood Dick:

"The captain does not mention the cause of his incarceration," he observed. "Why is he in jail?"

"An attempt was made to arrest him by the citizens in the belief that he was one of my agents—or perhaps you are not aware that I am waging a sort of bloodless warfare against the mining-camp of Grogville?"

"I heard about it."

"Well, your captain resisted the attempt to arrest him, until he had killed and wounded a number of men; then he was jailed, and, unless released, he will be shot to death to-morrow morning at sunrise. I managed to get into the jail as a guard, but could do no more than promise to come here, and guide you in an attack against the town, for the purpose of releasing your captain, and my wife, Calamity Jane, both of whom are confined in the same room."

"And in behalf of the boys, I will say that we are ready to go at almost an instant's notice—eh, boys?"

There was a general shout of approval from those gathered about the camp.

"I am glad to hear this," Dick declared. "How many men can you scare up within an hour, Mr. Lily?"

"Twenty-one, sir; but the twenty-first man would have to remain here on guard-duty. I have recruited several of these men to-day, but I feel sure they can be relied upon."

"You bet we can!" promptly responded a chorus of several voices. "We'll follow whar we're led, ef et's to rescue the captain."

"It may be, gentlemen," Deadwood Dick cried, "that when we get back to Grogville the citizens will already have executed Mormon Bill and Calamity Jane! Then—"

"Vengeance! We'll sack the accursed camp!"

It was Lieutenant Lily who uttered this threat, and it was received with vociferous cheers by his comrades.

"Yes, we'll have revenge!" Lily continued, when he could be heard. "This gentleman, boys, is the famous Deadwood Dick, of whom you have all heard, no doubt, and he is to be our leader, per my wish, and the request of Mormon Bill. If his wife is executed, I need not tell you he will make us a leader such as no other could be."

"Yes, gentlemen, we go to Grogville, to rescue those who are our friends!" Dick added. "The site of that camp belongs to me, and if we cannot rescue our friends, we can clean that camp out, if it takes a year to do it, and when we get possession of it, it is ours—yours and mine. Are you with me, then?"

"Hurrah! hurrah for Deadwood Dick!" yelled the crowd.

And of one accord the men arose, and extended their hands to their new commander, and there was a hearty shaking.

Then Dick urged the necessity of setting out for Grogville at once, and preparations were hastily completed.

The prisoners of the fortress were left in charge of the guard who had challenged Dick and who were confined in a dark part of the inclosure.

Dick being supplied with a fresh horse, he and his twenty armed followers rode down the mountain-side, and away toward Grogville, on their mission of rescue.

CHAPTER XV.

IRIS WINTHROP'S VENGEANCE.

WHEN French Ferd reached Big Gulch, he paused and gazed inquiringly up and down the mountain thoroughfare.

In the gulch all was dark and quiet, for there was scarcely enough air stirring to disturb a leaf.

Fully ten minutes the murderer stood as erect and immovable as a statue; then, he started off down the gulch, in another direction than that leading to Fort Freeze-Out.

For over a mile he continued on, until he came to a long fringe of bushes which grew at one side of the gulch.

Here he paused and looked sharply around him, and then plunged into the thicket.

When he came out he carried a stick about five feet long and six inches in circumference, and with this proceeded to pry up a heavy bowlder, near at hand.

After some exertion, he succeeded in moving it far enough aside to disclose a cavity underneath.

Thrusting his arm into this, he drew out a strong canvas bag, which was well filled.

"Ha! ha! my fortune is safe!" French Ferd cried aloud. "In this bag is money and gold enough to keep me like a gentleman for years to come. For all this I've played my game and won! Yes, won! and who can say I'm not cock-o'-the-walk! Hip, hurrah! Who?"

"I!" cried a voice, and the next instant French Ferd received a blow beside the head that knocked him flat upon the ground, and ere he could rise he was pounced upon by two men, who quickly pinioned his feet and hands.

And these two were none others than Dancing Dennis and Limburger Jakie.

"Arrah! an' phat a pic-nic we've bin afther strikin'!" cried Dennis, as he and Jakie arose and surveyed their captive. "By me soul, it's his honor, thur Mare av Grogville!"

"Vel, I should snigger!" coincided Jakie. "He haf vone fortunes in dot bag, und he vas goin' der skib der fol-der-rol-loo, or vatever you calls him."

"Bedad, an' that's jist phat he vas goin' to do, but we nipped his purthy little skame in the bud, eh! Mr. Frinchy Ferd?"

"Ten thousand curses on you! Release me, or I'll cut yer hearts out, you bums! D'ye hear?" roared French Ferd, his rage knowing no bounds when he saw, beyond doubt, that the two ruffians were to confiscate his ill-gotten treasure.

For the space of five minutes French Ferd struggled to get free, and almost made the air blue with blasphemy, all of which Dennis and Jakie seemed to enjoy.

At last Ferd stopped, from sheer want of breath.

"Goot!" Jakie said, clapping his hands. "You do sbblendid, Mishter Frenchy. Vid a leedle more vindt, you make der sdars fall oud deir sockets."

"Faith, an' he would!" assented Dennis.

"Come, now!" Ferd finally said, changing his tone. "Let me free and I'll whack up with you."

"Bad luck to yez, phat for we be afther doin' that, whin we have the whole betwane us already? Nixey, Mishter Frinchy! We're satisfied. Yez fooled us on thim counterfeit greenbacks, but this gits us aven wid yez. We saw a wolf back here a bit, an' no doubt he'll be sniffin' at yez. Good-by, Mishter Frinchy—good-by. We're off for Mormon Bill's den, now, to make another raise, an' then we

go Aiste, an' s'hart a bank. Oh! it's a fly pair o' fowls we be! Arrah! grab the bag, Jakie! Good-by!"

"Good-py, Frinchmons!" added Jakie. "Take gare mit yourself dot der musgeeter don'd vas bite you!"

And, bearing the bag between them, they trudged off up the gulch, followed by French Ferd's furious curses.

The footsteps of the two oddly-mated roughs died out in the distance, and French Ferd was alone, at the mercy of any beast of the mountains that might stroll that way.

But only for a few minutes was he alone.

He heard a light footstep, and saw through the gray gloom, to which his eyes had become accustomed, a woman standing before him.

"So you did not escape with your stolen fortune after all, did you, Ferdinand French!" she said. "Ha! ha! I thought you wouldn't, and meant that you shouldn't! I knew who robbed the bank, and should have intercepted you had not the two renegades done so."

"Who are you?" French Ferd gasped, in added tremor.

"I am Iris Glenroy, the Avenger!" she replied, in a cold, pitiless tone. "I have set out to-night, to seek vengeance for the wrongs done me, and to one whom I worship, next to my God. All who war against him, war against me—hence you are my first victim!"

"You are mad, woman. I have never injured you in any manner whatever!"

"Have you not? Is not Mormon Bill confined in the Grogville jail, condemned to death by you? Of course he is! and but for your fear of Deadwood Dick, you would have remained in the camp to superintend the execution. Oh! you see I know you, and shall not spare you. See that!"

She held out her left arm.

French Ferd saw, with no little surprise, that the hand was wholly missing!

"I cannot strike with that, you see!" she went on, fiercely. "but I can with my right. So take that! It is blow number one."

A knife flashed through the air, and French Ferd uttered a fearful groan.

With a suppressed shriek, Iris Winthrop—for this was indeed William Winthrop's wife of former days, turned and sped off up the gulch, as if to hasten from the deed she had done.

She was evidently accustomed to the hardships of the trail, and was fatigue proof, for she continued on, on, on, her course being toward Fort Freeze-Out.

As she was going up the mountain, she was forced to hastily conceal herself to avoid being seen by a cavalcade of horsemen coming down, which was none other than Deadwood Dick and his party, en route for Grogville.

When they had passed, she came out of her hiding, and gazed after them.

"That was Deadwood Dick in the lead," she murmured, "and if I mistake not, he is going to Grogville to attempt to rescue his wife and my husband. He will have big odds to contend with, and I must be quick with my errand, and get back to fulfill my purpose, of which no one is yet aware. Even if Deadwood Dick does not make it so, I will see that no such town as Grogville exists ere many more days are past!"

She continued on up the mountain-side, and when she reached the summit plateau, was surprised to find the guard lying dead, near the edge, his skull crushed in by a heavy blow.

As soon as she saw this the woman Avenger crouched out of sight. She knew not but what Dennis or Jakie might be doing guard duty in the entrance to the "fort," for it appeared to her quite evident that they had already reached the mountain-top, and after the departure of the men under Deadwood Dick's command, had killed the guard. She resolved to run her chances, and crept stealthily toward the building.

She reached the entrance, and peered in.

The fire was burning dimly, and within its light lay the prisoners, with Jakie and Dennis standing over them.

"Mercy! mercy!" Mrs. Seybert was crying. "We know nothing of the outlaws' treasure, and have no valuables, for they robbed us of them. Lieutenant Lily has them all about his person, I think. Oh! sirs, you betrayed us into this trouble—help us to escape, I pray of you! If you will but do so, you will be richly paid for it."

"How you pay us ven you have noddings to pay mit?" Jake demanded.

"Oh! easy enough: once we get home, in San Francisco, I have a bank account there, and will reward you liberally."

"Vot you giff off we release you, und accompany you to San Francisco?" Jakie demanded.

"I will give you each five thousand dollars!"

"Dot's pargin!" Jakie declared. "Vot you say Irish?"

"I'm not kickin' a bit, me boy. Shall we release the prisoners at once?"

"Yaw!"

They started to perform that operation, but never accomplished it.

There came a sharp pistol-report from the darkness; Dennis uttered an unearthly yell, and fell forward on his face, where he struggled but once or twice.

Jakie, with a bellow of alarm, essayed to run from the "fort," but before he could reach the door, there was another pistol-report, and he, too, took a drop, his life ebbing out as he fell.

These two shots, and their deadly results, caused the prisoners to blanch with terror.

"Good Heaven! we shall all be murdered in cold blood!" shrieked Mrs. Seybert. "Oh! what shall we do?"

"Meet the death you deserve, without quailing!" cried a woman's voice, and the next instant Iris, the Avenger, glided into the firelight.

A chorus of startled shrieks burst from the two captive women, at sight of her, while Tom Seybert uttered a furious curse.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Iris, mockingly, "you were not expecting me, eh? You thought me dead, and that you had no one to fear, except my wronged husband, who visited you, last night! But, you didn't reckon aright. Do you doubt that I am Iris Winthrop whom you ruined—do you doubt it, you fiends in human shape? If so, look at that!"

And as if to increase their already great terror, she held out the dismembered arm.

"My God! it is Iris!" Mrs. Seybert moaned.

"Yes, it is I, Madam Merton!" was the bitter reply, "and here is the hand!"

She drew from under her shawl the petrified hand, with its chain and stiletto attachments, and thrust it before their gaze.

"There's the hand you brutally severed from my arm, Madam Merton! You thought I was dead, when you fled, guilty wretches that you were. I escaped from the room, and, thirsting for vengeance, I traveled miles that night. I need not tell you that I have been searching for you ever since. And, now, at last, my turn has come."

"Spare us! spare us, I beg of you!" Mrs. Merton pleaded, piteously. "We will lead better lives in the future, and do all in our power to atone for the wrong we have done you!"

"Bah! There can be no atonement for such as you! It was you, unscrupulous wretch, who tempted me to your gambling den; it was you who gave me the first taste of wine, and poisoned my mind against my husband; you who led me down the path of temptation, until I became a thief, and had no other course than to follow where you led. Can you expect mercy from me?—Never! You die, with my curse upon you!"

She drew a revolver, and cocked it, a glare of undying determination in her wild eyes—an expression of unappeasable hatred upon her once fair face.

"Mercy! mercy!" screamed Madam Merton.

"I am only too merciful in killing you in a humane way," was the un pitying response. "Thomas Merton, after your mother caused my temporal ruin, you sought to make it more complete, but never succeeded. You also shot me. You, then, are my first victim, your cousin second, and your mother last. The negro can go free."

"You have until I count one hundred to make peace with your Maker, who, with His forgiving nature, may overlook your misdeeds; I cannot!"

She said no more, but stood with her weapon ready to fulfill the threatened execution of her vengeance.

Evidently the prisoners felt the advisability of following her directions, for they remained mute and with bowed heads.

Half an hour later Iris Winthrop left Fort Freeze-Out. Her face was dark and moody, but her eyes gleamed less vengefully.

"It's all over!" she muttered, "and I'm not sorry. I had sworn to do it, and when poor Bill knows it perhaps he will relent and take me back. If not I care not to live any longer."

She went on down the mountain-side, and hurried away toward Grogville, little suspecting the surprise that would await her there.

CHAPTER XVI.

GAME TO THE LAST.

FRENCH FERD had not been gone from Grogville an hour when a suspicion entered Purty Pete's mind that it was somewhat queer that his master (as he recognized the new mayor) was not to be seen anywhere about the camp. It occurred next to the dwarf that it might not be amiss to take a look at Giles Goff, who had been reported as in a drunken sleep.

When he entered Ferd's private room he found Goff tumbled in a heap on the floor, his limbs and face contorted and swollen.

It took but a glance to satisfy Pete that he was dead, and he was quick in inferring that French Ferd had quitted the town.

After some deliberation he formed a plan which caused his wolfish eyes to gleam with exultation.

Procuring the large hotel dinner-bell, he went out on the piazza of the Casino, and began to ring with all his might and main.

The result was that, in a few minutes, the whole populace was massed in front of the building, or upon its piazza, many of whom were armed with torches or lanterns, owing to the darkness.

Then Purty Pete mounted a box, and shouted:

"Gentlemen, I'm heer ter make er disclosure that'll s'prise ye wuss'n thunder. Ther mayor, French Ferd, hev shuk ther dust o' ther town off'n his feet, because he war 'feard Deadwood Dick would make mince-meat out o' him!"

A great yell of surprise went up.

"Silence!" roared Purty Pete, drawing his revolvers. "Muzzle yer mugs 'til I git thru, or I'll make a bigger score than Mormon Bill did. I say, French Ferd he's sloped. How do I know et? 'Cause he's bin gone an hour, an' in his room Giles Goff lays deader'n a door-nail. My 'pinion is, gals, thet Goff an' French robbed ther bank themselves, an' Ferd's killed Goff and monkeyed away wi' ther boodle. Mebbe I ain't right tho'—that's only er suppersition."

"What I want say is, ye've lost yer mayor, an'

need a new gerloot ter legislate things. Ef I'll do, jst spit et out. I ain't much fer gud looks, some say, but I kin run a town ter a T, an' don't yer fer-git et! An' ef ye proclaim me boss o' this hyer camp, thar won't be no more monkey work 'bout them prisoners in the jail. We'll take 'em out an' lynch 'em this hyer very night, an' ther Casino bar shall set out free bug-juice from now till mornin'!"

A shout went up from the throats of the miners that fairly made the building tremble.

"Hurrah for Purty Pete for mayor!" cried a miner, "and death to Deadwood Dick and all his allies!"

And this cry was taken up by nearly every man in the crowd and yelled over and over again.

"Feller-citerzens, I'm proud ter be yer supeeryer officer," Purty Pete continued, as soon as he could make himself heard; "an' yer kin bet everything shall go as I've said. I'll now tell ye the order of festivities:

"First, five rounds o' bug-juice, ter make us feel merry;

"Second, march to ther jail, four abreast, each man wi' torch;

"Third, fetchin' prisoners out, an' readin' o' their death-warrant by ther Honorable Purty Pete;

"Fourth, march ter ther big tree, upper end o' camp;

"Fifth, adjustin' o' ther nooses, an' preparin' fer ther final send-off;

"Sixth, all hands on ther ropes;

"Seventh, address ther prisoner, by ther Honorable Purty Pete, Esquire, reflectin' on ther folly o' wickedness, an' what comes o' et;

"Eighth, signal to pull;

"Ninth, a slow pull, and a sure pull; an' ther song of 'Up in A Balloon, Boys,' by all hands;

"Tenth return ter ther Casino, an' a geolorious old drunk. Hurra! boys, what d'yer say ter Purty Pete fer a high boss mayor?"

The answer was certainly reassuring to the hideous dwarf, for, for over five minutes the crowd yelled and screeched their approval, and danced and knocked each other around in a manner that would have put an asylum of maniacs to utter shame.

Then, a rush was made for the bar, to perform the first act in the programme—namely, pouring down five rounds of the rot known to them as whisky.

It is unnecessary to add that, numerous though applicants for the beverage were, it did not consume more than half an hour's time to dispose of the prescribed five rounds, and as every man took a brimming glass of the poison, each time, it was but a natural consequence that all hands were beginning to feel hilarious by the time the fifth round was down, and in ripe humor for the "sport" ahead.

The next act on the programme was to procure torches and light them, after which the howling mob was marshaled into line by Purty Pete, and bore down upon the jail.

When the jail was reached, the door was opened and the prisoners were dragged forth 'neath the glaring light of the torches.

The cords were removed from their feet, but those about their wrists were tightened, and they were in the grasp of a dozen pair of hands, so there was no possibility of their escaping.

The faces of both Calamity Jane and Mormon Bill, were stern and composed, and it appeared evident that they knew why they were brought from the jail, and were prepared to meet their fates bravely.

"Calamity Jane, an' Butterfly Ben!" cried Purty Pete, confronting the prisoners, "et aire ther verdict o' ther people o' Grogville, that you shall die fer ther crimes you've committed, and that, too, without any more monkeyin' about it. Within twenty minutes you will be strung up by ther neck, ter hang 'til ye'r dead. So, while ye'r marchin' to yer own funeral, ye'd better be doin' what prayin' ye want do in this world!"

Neither of the prisoners vouchsafed a reply, and so Calamity Jane and her companion were wheeled into line, and the death march began toward the other end of the camp, where was a large tree, with outstretching branches.

The crowd brought up the rear, with hideous yells and hoots, and the glare of the torches made the procession a most weird spectacle.

En route, as they were marched along—Winthrop said to Calamity, in a low tone:

"I fear there's no hope, Calamity!"

"None!" she replied, "I've given up all hope, and shall meet my fate the same as I have lived—fearlessly. I have a presentiment that Deadwood Dick will not be long in following me."

"Bravely spoken!" said her companion, warmly; "and even as you meet your end so will I meet mine. We can die but once, and there shall be no scene for these devils to gloat over, so far as I am concerned."

Calamity nodded her approval, and they marched on.

At last the scene of the proposed lynching was reached, and the doomed couple stood beneath a gaunt, outreaching limb that was to be their gallows.

Two long, strong lariats were thrown over the limb, and the nooses placed securely around the throats of the pair.

The crowd then divided into two parties, and seized the "pull-ends" of the lariats, ready at the word of Purty Pete to launch the prisoners into eternity.

When these preparations were complete, Purty Pete once more confronted the prisoners.

"In a few minutes ye die!" he said; "an' I hope this 'ere will be an example to ill-doers in ther future. Crime an' sinfulness aire mean goods ter dab-

ble in, an' one's misdeeds generally fall back on him. On course et aire nasty bizness ter lynch anybody, but in yer case et aire a duty ter ther law-abidin' public. Hev ye any last requests ter make 'fore ther Old Nick gripes his fingers round yer wind-pipes?"

There was no answer.

A trifle pale, but with features resolutely composed, Mormon Bill stood speechless and defiant, his gaze directed toward the lights of the camp.

"Oho! So yer won't answer, hey? Ye'r goin' ter pass in yer checks as cool an' independent like as ef ye were goin' ter fetch all the cash back in the bank, are ye? Waal, neow, I admire your spunk, but that won't do ye no good. And, as ther honorable mayor o' this hyer camp, and liable some day ter be President o' these United States, an' Territories, I can't allow no monkey bizness ner mockin'-bird mercy 'bout a matter like this. Once more—hev ye any remarks ter make on this funeral occasion, for grim death freezes ter ye wuss than frost ter an Arctic stove-pipe!"

Again there was no response; but the prisoners' lips became compressed a little tighter.

"Nuff said!" Purty Pete growled. "When I say three, boys, up they go a-hummin'."

"One! Two! Three!"

At the signal of three—

Half an hour later, two lifeless and stiffening bodies swung from the limb of the tree, near which no living person stood.

Mormon Bill and Calamity Jane were dead!

Later, in the wee small hours, toward morning, a number of dusky figures might have been seen in the vicinity, but they were not citizens of Grogville.

They were over at the Casino, making the night noisy with drunken hilarity and ribald song.

They were celebrating a great and glorious occasion—a crowning event, as Honorable Purty Pete put it.

Little they dreamed of what was yet to come—the last act in the terrible drama!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST ACT IN THE DRAMA.

Of course there was no sleep in Grogville that night and consequently no man could brag of being out of bed first, for the orgies within the Casino were yet unabated, at broad daylight.

It however remained for the first man sober enough to get out of doors, to make two discoveries, and that man was none other than Purty Pete, himself.

He was a man who could stand a powerful amount of strong drink, without losing his senses or locomotive power, and hence, when morning came, he was feeling but little the worse for the night's carousal.

The first discovery he made, was one that caused him to utter a startled ejaculation.

Upon the door of the Casino, and likewise upon all the doors in the neighborhood, huge placards were tacked, containing notices written in a bold hand, in crimson ink, or blood—the latter most likely.

The notice on the door of the Casino, was as follows:

"WARNING!"

"TAKE NOTICE EVERY MAN WOMAN AND CHILD IN GROGVILLE:

"The unjust and unwarranted execution of Mormon Bill and Calamity Jane, has brought down the curse of Deadwood Dick upon this camp, and the curse of Lone Hand, Mormon Bill's wife, and this camp is doomed, as are all who hereafter seek to dwell in this pocket.

"A last warning is hereby given you that an attack will be made on this camp to-night, by our formidable forces, and none will be spared, who come within the scope of our fury—not one—nor will sunrise, to-morrow, see a tenable structure in this camp.

"Therefore, if you would escape our vengeance, fly while you have time—to-day, between sunrise and sunset.

"Those who remain behind, believing they can fight, and save the town, will lose their lives, and have only themselves to blame, as this warning is given so that you can escape before the blow falls. So stay who will—go who will. Death! and vengeance for the deaths of Calamity Jane and Mormon Bill, to those who dare defy this warning.

"Doubly Signed:

"DEADWOOD DICK, and 'THE LONE HAND.'"

Purty Pete read the notice over and over; then, he read those on the neighboring doors.

All were alike!

The dwarf then walked to a point where he could see the lynching tree, and made the discovery that the bodies of Calamity Jane and Mormon Bill were no longer dangling from the limb.

They had been removed, through the night—doubtless by Deadwood Dick.

Purty Pete then went back to the Casino, and announced his discoveries.

There were a few, like himself, capable of understanding the situation, but others were so hopelessly drunk that fully two hours were consumed before they could be aroused to a sense of the impending danger.

When they were aroused, they were ugly and ill-natured, and willing to swear they could lick a whole regiment of men.

The placards were read and re-read, and when the populace came to a full understanding of the threat of Deadwood Dick and Lone Hand, the excitement grew greater and greater.

By noon, such miners as had families, had made

preparations to leave camp, and a number of others had announced their intention of pulling up stakes and vamping.

On the other hand, Purty Pete did his utmost to urge all hands to cling to their possessions, denouncing the placards to be a scare got up by Deadwood Dick in order to gain a foothold.

"Why, ye'r a durned pack o' fools!" he said, as he addressed the crowd from the piazza of the Casino. "Heer we air, ther owners o' as peart a claim as ther aire in Arizona, an' yet some o' ye say ye'r goin' ter skin out, just on account o' them posters! Bah! go ef ye want. Ther rest o' us what's left kin clean up Deadwood Dick and his crowd, an' we'll own what we defend, you bet!"

By such persuasion and threat, he got a number of men to promise to remain and help fight it out.

Shortly after noon, the first delegation of over a dozen stampedeers took their departure, some on foot, others on horseback, and a few in wagons.

This was but the signal for others to leave, and soon a constant stream of people were straggling out of the doomed city.

The stage arrived with one passenger, but as soon as Jehu heard the news, he turned around and took out of the pocket a load of passengers that tested the capacity of his vehicle.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the exodus practically ceased.

But, with what result?

There was found to be, actual count, only fifty men left in the camp.

These had signified their intention of staying and helping Purty Pete to fight it out.

Pete looked the men over, rather grimly.

"Waal, boys, ef this aire all that's left o' us, we'll hev ter do some big fightin', no doubt, to save the camp, an' that we will do, you bet! We've plenty o' weapons an' ammunition, and when ther sun rises ter-morrer, I allow we'll still hold the camp. Ef we don't, we'll be buzzard food. Them's facts, an' so I allow you'll all fight ther best ye know how?"

"You bet we will!" was the response.

Work was at once begun, preparing for defense.

All the weapons were got together and loaded, and conveyed into the Blazing Brand hotel, which, although it was a frame structure, had no rear or side doors or windows, and was therefore an admirable place to defend an attack.

As soon as it came dark, Purty Pete and his men shut themselves within the hotel and waited.

The hours dragged slowly by.

It was nearly midnight when the first intimation was received that the avengers were in the pocket. This was when it was discovered that the Casino was on fire in the rear.

Soon the neighboring dwellings and stores were also on fire, and next, the smell of smoke warned the defenders that the Blazing Brand was also on fire in the rear.

As if to aid the conflagration, a strong breeze had sprung up, and it seemed to blow down into the valley from all directions.

The surroundings of the two hotels soon became a seething vortex of flames, and at last Purty Pete and his men were forced to flee from their refuge into the street, for fear of smothering.

As they did so, two bodies of horsemen dashed down upon them, from either direction, and they were completely hemmed in.

Then and there ensued a desperate fight of half an hour's duration—until the mounted party was forced by the intense heat of the conflagration to retreat.

Then, the handful of men belonging to Purty Pete made good their escape.

When the morning sun arose, Grogville was a mass of smoking ruins.

Down in the valley, a number of men were busy interring those of both parties who had been killed.

Upon a grassy slope, lay Deadwood Dick.

His eyes were closed; there was a deathly pallor on his cheek.

It was evident that he was dying.

Lieutenant Lily and Iris Winthrop knelt beside him, with tearful eyes.

Just as the first ray of sunlight dwelt upon the fallen chieftain's face, he opened his eyes.

"It will all be over, soon," he said, faintly, "and I'll not be sorry, either. It has been a long campaign, this life of mine, and its end is, now. Calamity is gone, but I'll not be long behind her. Our adopted boy, Rex, will be in good hands, and those who have him will have power to use my means to support him. A last request. Bury me and Calamity in some peaceful valley where we may lie undisturbed—for-ever—ah!"

That was the last.

He never spoke again.

The famous Deadwood Dick's last campaign was indeed at an end.

In a quiet valley, 'mid the mountains, where birds sing and flowers bloom the year around, there are four mounds.

Each bears a headstone.

One reads "Calamity Jane. Frank with friends, fearless of foes." Another reads, "William Winthrop," and still another "Iris Winthrop." The fourth stone is a large one and bears this inscription: "Here Lies Deadwood Dick, brave, honorable and kind, in peace; cool, fearless and daring in war."

A mile down the valley, dwells a prosperous farmer and ranchman.

His name is Lloyd Lily.

And he keeps those graves green.

THE END.

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